

*A Centenary
History of the
Indian
National
Congress*

VOLUME II: 1919-1935

General Editor: B.N. PANDE



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A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress
(1885-1985)



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PRIME MINISTER

Foreword

SINCE ITS INCEPTION the Indian National Congress has been the voice of resurgent India. Even before the days of a mass electorate, it spoke with authority on behalf of the people of India. Its founding fathers reflected Indian public opinion at its best. They represented all the geographical regions and ethnic and religious diversities of the country. The intellectual distinction and moral eminence of leaders of the Congress like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Surendranath Banerjea and Subramania Iyer were such that the people looked upon the Congress as the Parliament of the emerging Indian nation. The Congress addressed itself to basic socio-political and economic issues. Its deliberations moulded a new national public. In the early years the Congress was still a reformist rather than a revolutionary organization. But the then foreign rulers had a healthy respect for it.

Like a mountain torrent that becomes a major river on entering the plains, the Indian National Congress received tributaries from all over the country and became the established political mainstream of the land. There were few persons of standing in any part of the country who did not owe allegiance to it. After the Swadeshi Movement, its mass base widened, under the impulse of men like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai. With the end of World War I, the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh, the pace of political change quickened. Mahatma Gandhi burst upon the nation. In Jawaharlal Nehru's words:

He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like the whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of people's minds He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of Indians, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition.

The Congress came to be *of* the people not merely *for* the people. It placed the thunderbolt of non-violent action in the hands of the deprived. Satyagraha gave giants' strength to the weak. It marked India's mental liberation and undermined the rulers' moral authority. The law was no longer what the rulers laid down but what the people were ready to accept as just.

The manner in which Mahatma Gandhi was able to enlist the participation of the people of India in days before the mass media bespoke of his political genius. Every great leader is a great persuader. The Congress under Mahatma Gandhi welded the people of India into a political entity in spite of the multiplicity of languages, in spite of illiteracy, and in spite of the colonial Government's efforts to discredit it through its loyal cadres. But Gandhiji and the Congress succeeded because they knew what causes to take up and how to relate politics to the people's needs, and the nation's value system. Above all they succeeded because the people felt convinced that the Congress had righteousness on its side, while the ruling power only had brute force.

In party-building Mahatma Gandhi followed the simple but revolutionary expedient of considering every Indian a potential member of the Congress unless that person openly distanced himself from it. No priests or chamberlains guarded the entrance. While critics schooled in European political traditions, liberal or socialist, deplored the reluctance of the Congress to build up cadres and enforce doctrinal uniformity, it is evident today that the Congress could not have become an open, inclusive party that it is, if it had made membership selective and adopted a narrow and rigid credo. So many cadre-based parties have lost their elan and the capacity for self-correction but the Congress, although less than perfect and often criticized, has exhibited a remarkable capacity for self-renewal, and for deriving inspiration and sustenance from the people of India.

In drawing the masses in, the Congress attracted gifted personalities at the pinnacle of their professions, like Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, men and women who had already made a mark, like Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, Rajagopalachari, Rajen Babu and Sarojini Naidu, and the most dynamic leaders of the younger generation, like Jawaharlal Nehru, Badshah Khan, Subhas Bose and Jayaprakash Narayan. Many humble workers came into the Congress who later became stalwarts, like Lal Bahadur Shastri and Kamaraj. Charisma called out to charisma and integrity attracted integrity. Thus it was that the people were convinced that the national movement could provide leaders superior to what the colonial system could.

At its very creation the Congress was democratic and secular. Under the influence of mass politics it also became socialist, pledged to promot-

ing the interests of the vast millions of landless and propertyless. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it at the Lucknow Congress in 1936: 'I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States systems.'

Fighting poverty, along with the abolition of untouchability, became the socio-economic programme of the Congress, even as winning freedom through non-violence was its political objective.

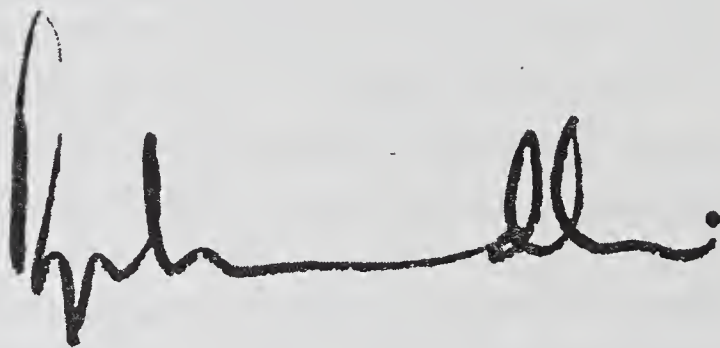
In the latter part of the twenties and throughout the thirties, Congressmen realized that they were fighting the battle not only of the people of India but of subject peoples all over the world. India had to win independence, and the entire edifice of colonialism would collapse. The Congress evolved a foreign policy which was based on our identification with the cause of freedom and equality everywhere. When World War II broke out, it was galling for India to be denied an opportunity to fight on behalf of the forces of freedom against fascism.

I am not going into the tortuous negotiations with the British and the circumstances leading to the end of imperial rule over India. I shall content myself with saying that when free India was born, it had a party with a large vision and lofty principles and a leadership of a calibre rarely seen in world history. It had an unparalleled hold on people's loyalties. Freedom could not have been consolidated and major programmes of social change through consent could not have been initiated if the Congress had thought that its work was over with the attainment of freedom. The Congress adopted a Constitution which reflected India's unity-in-diversity, and which provided for a strong Centre co-existing with thriving States. It undertook the grand task of national planning which, later under Indira Gandhi, enabled the nation to attain agricultural and industrial self-reliance.

At hundred, the Congress is young and vital. Its spirit of service and its sense of history are undimmed. Several groups have broken away from the Congress from time to time. But the Congress continues to be India's political mainstream. Freedom's battle has not ended. The causes of democracy, secularism and socialism, and of peace, coexistence and equality among the nations place continuing responsibilities on the Congress. It has to help the country to complete the unfinished revolution of technological modernization and eradication of poverty and thereby release the creative energies of India.

I think it most appropriate that as part of the Centenary celebrations, the Congress should place before the people of India, more particularly before the younger generations, a scholarly and comprehensive account

of its role in the struggle for freedom and the social and economic reconstruction of India. Such an account has more than just antiquarian interest. The past offers no simple clues to the present or the future. But a scholarly work like the *Centenary History of the Indian National Congress* has much to offer to us by way of self-perception and poise as we face the new challenges. The Congress is grateful to Shri B.N. Pande and to the distinguished galaxy of scholars who have contributed to this collective endeavour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, ending with a dot.

(Rajiv Gandhi)

New Delhi
October 4, 1985

Preface

ON 28 DECEMBER 1985 the Indian National Congress, the party which won freedom for India and has shaped her fortunes since 1947, celebrates its centenary. The achievements of the Congress over the past century and its potential for the future have few parallels in the history of India. For the first sixty-two years of its existence, the Congress presided over a national movement of epic proportions, which sought to transform a civilization of antiquity into a modern nation, and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the greatest imperial power known to humankind. Moreover, the party which led the people of India to independence has, thereafter, played a decisive role in shaping their moral and material destiny. Indeed, under a youthful leader of distinguished stature, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress is today poised to lead the people of India into a new phase of national creativity in the 21st century.

As the centenary of the Congress drew near, the late Shrimati Indira Gandhi initiated a scholarly project with the objective of evaluating the party's contribution to the struggle for freedom as well as to the social and economic development of India in the decades since 1947. She believed that a proper appreciation of the Congress; of the great leaders who had shaped its politics; of their ideals and the movements which they initiated; and of the central place which the Congress held in the affections of the people; were vital to the task of building a resurgent India. Shrimati Gandhi also realized the colossal magnitude of such a scholarly endeavour. It was, therefore, her desire that a comprehensive history of the Congress be written through the participation of the community of historians which had grown in India over the past few decades. Shrimati Gandhi believed that this history of the Congress should be addressed to the people as a whole. But it was to be addressed in particular to the generations which had come of age after 1947, and could, therefore, profit enormously from a recapitulation of the ideals which sustained the freedom struggle; and the sacrifices of tens upon

thousands which lay behind the emergence of India as a nation free to shape its destiny.

With this end in view the Congress (I) Working Committee appointed the Congress History Project Committee in April 1976, with Congress President as Chairman and B.N. Pande (myself) as Executive Director. It took many years in locating and collecting original documents and material. I was a bit apprehensive of the responsibility I had undertaken and of its successful execution. But with the inspiration and encouragement I received from Shrimati Gandhi and the co-operation from my distinguished colleagues and nearly fifty eminent scholars, I was able to fulfil this gigantic task of bringing out this Centenary History of the Indian National Congress, an organization with which I have had the honour and privilege of continuous association for the last 65 years, since 1920.

In planning *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, we also received full support and encouragement from the Prime Minister and the President of the Congress, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who took keen interest in the execution of this project. Shri Rajiv Gandhi's profound grasp of the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi — ideals which underpinned the struggle for freedom and informed the reconstruction of India after 1947 — are a matter of public knowledge. Also important for us was his perception of what would interest and inform the younger generations, since our scholarly labour was specially directed towards placing before them a stimulating account of the past as a clue to the present and a guide to the future.

The task of writing a comprehensive history of the Congress turned out to be a colossal one. Perhaps it would be correct to state that rarely has a scholarly undertaking of such magnitude, drawing upon the labour of close upon fifty scholars, ever been attempted before. The results of this labour are now before you. It was my privilege to oversee their preparation in the capacity of its General Editor and Chairman of its Editorial Board. We trust that the people of India, more particularly the younger generations, will find in these volumes a stimulating account of the Congress; of the struggle which led to the liberation of our country; and also of the effort which went into the task of building a new nation on the foundations of an old civilization. Perhaps our account will also provide the people with the moral sustenance which they need for resolving the problems which they face today, and the challenges which they may encounter in the years which lie ahead.

I

While it would be difficult to portray in a brief account an overview of the Congress over the past century, more particularly because this task-

has been attempted by my scholarly colleagues in the accounts which follow, I would nevertheless like to highlight some of the seminal developments which constitute the substance of the *Centenary History*. It is well known that the Congress owes its genesis to the initiative of a British civilian, Allen Octavian Hume, who had over the years gained an understanding of the aspirations of the educated as well as of the popular classes. Hume posed before the intelligentsia the challenge of organizing an all-India forum, where matters of national concern could be debated, and the results of such deliberations communicated to the British Government for remedial action.

While Hume's role in organizing a national forum for the educated classes of India is well known, it would be simplistic to assume that his initiative was the solitary factor behind the genesis of the Congress. Indeed, there are two cores of political activity which need to be highlighted before we can appreciate the context in which the Congress came to life. At least half a century before Hume's initiative, the landed gentry, the commercial classes and the intelligentsia of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had initiated a process which culminated in the birth of the Congress in 1885. The activities of these classes were reflected in the growth of the local and regional associations which mushroomed in the subcontinent in the decades under review. Even more important than this elite activity were stirrings within the popular classes — the peasantry, the tribal communities, and the working and artisan classes — some of which were articulated in the uprising of 1857. Here we touch upon social classes whose economic condition or political consciousness has been only partially explored, though their importance — they constituted the overwhelming majority of the Indian people — to the national movement hardly needs any emphasis. The aspirations of the popular classes are vividly reflected in the scholarly contributions to the *Centenary History*, since it is only through their participation in the freedom struggle that the Congress acquired the strength to dislodge British imperialism.

There is ample evidence in historical literature of the misery which the British Government inflicted upon the popular classes; and the manner in which this created in peasants, workers, artisans and tribals a sense of hostility towards the regime of imperialism. Indeed, throughout the decades under consideration, the popular classes rose repeatedly against the alien rulers, in movements of protest which are increasingly being drawn into the ambit of scholarly research. Perhaps the resistance of the peasantry to exploitation at the hands of the British Government is sensitively highlighted in numerous studies of agrarian nationalism. More dramatic were tribal uprisings against imperial exploitation, the most vivid example of which is the Santhal uprising of 1855. Within the cities of India, too, a working class had crystallized by the closing

decades of the 19th century which erupted in movements of great strength against the colonial state. As already suggested, Hume was aware of these rumblings of disaffection within the womb of Indian society, just as he also realized that a nationalist alliance between the intelligentsia and the popular classes would seriously undermine British control over India.

The delegates who assembled in Bombay on 28 December 1885, at the first annual session of the Congress, were representative of all social classes and communities which subscribed to nationalism and sought to shape a new destiny for India. Most of the delegates were drawn from the local and regional associations which had sprung to life in the preceding decades in various parts of the country. Again, most of them were lawyers, or journalists, or scholars, or men of business, or members of the landed classes, and they represented an alliance of the intelligentsia with the professional and commercial classes, on the one hand, and the landed gentry, on the other. At first blush, therefore, it would appear that the organization which came into existence in 1885 spoke only for a small fragment of the Indian nation. Yet the modest base of the Congress, when it was born in 1885, did not exhaust the social vision of its members or preclude them from reaching out to the popular classes in subsequent decades.

That the Congress looked upon itself as a political movement destined to reach out to the nation as a whole, is demonstrated by its agenda of political action and the ideology which its leaders shaped out in the next two decades. While it is true that the Congress largely concerned itself with questions affecting the interests of the middle classes, such issues did not exhaust its social concerns. Thus, while among the issues taken up for deliberation were those pertaining to the creation of representative institutions within the country, and the increasing participation of Indians in the civil service, some leaders of the Congress, like Dadabhai Naoroji and R.C. Dutt, were equally concerned about relations between Great Britain and India and the manner in which these were articulated between different classes within Indian society. Thus, Naoroji elaborated the 'Drain Theory', which demonstrated how the wealth of India was siphoned off to Great Britain; and Dutt built up a critique of the manner in which this exploitation contributed to the impoverishment of the rural classes. The social vision of the leaders of the Congress, in the first two or three decades after its creation was, therefore, not limited to the interests of the classes which flocked to its annual sessions. Indeed, they assumed responsibility for the nation as a whole, more particularly for the peasantry, even at a juncture when they were not able to reach out to the popular classes.

The concern of the leaders of the Congress for the nation, for the rich

as well as the poor, was by no means a purely abstract concern. Prominent among the youthful leaders who were drawn to the Congress at this juncture, in the first few years, were men like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Badruddin Tyabji, Anand Charlu, Vijaya-
raghavachariar, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, all below 45 years of age, who were interested in reaching out to the popular classes, and who also believed that the idiom of nationalist policies would have to be indigenized, and given a structure appropriate to the cultural traditions of India, before such a consummation could be accomplished.

While the Congress was seeking to broaden its support, the British Government decided to strike a death-blow at the party as the embodiment of nationalism. The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, believed that the Congress enjoyed the support only of the educated classes, and could easily be wiped out of existence. Yet the educated classes were causing the British Government considerable disquiet, more particularly in the Presidency of Bengal. By partitioning the presidency into smaller territorial units, Curzon sought to fatally weaken the Bengali intelligentsia and dampen the fires of nationalism in the region. The partition of Bengal was ostensibly a measure of administrative rationalization. Actually, it sought to deliver the *coup de grace* to the nationalist classes of Bengal. Nor did the intelligentsia harbour any illusions about the motivations of Curzon. Indeed, the agitation against the partition of Bengal revealed the extent to which the political activity of men like Aurobindo in Bengal; Tilak in Maharashtra; and Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh in the Punjab had disseminated nationalism among entirely new classes of Indian society. Even the moderate, Surendranath Banerjea, took offence at the insult hurled at Bengal. Needless to say, leaders like Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal were much more effective than Banerjea in the anti-partition agitation, and they transformed the movement into something akin to a mass struggle in the region. Their efforts were augmented by the literary work of Rabindranath Tagore, the distinguished poet. The agitation against the partition of Bengal took the form of a movement, the so-called Swadeshi Movement, which attempted to bring about a far reaching transformation within Indian society. This movement shook the British Raj to its very foundations, and the populist support which it aggregated obliged the British Government to revoke the partition in 1911.

Beyond the 'Extremist', leaders of the Swadeshi Movement there emerged a number of revolutionary groups, whose members sought to liberate India through selective acts of violence. Such groups were often inspired by the writings of Aurobindo and Tilak, though their vision of liberation through violence differed from the vision of these two leaders. They believed that, through the assassination of key civil servants, they

could inspire the people of India to rise against British imperialism and win freedom. Needless to say, the coercive resources available to the British Government outmatched the capacity for violence of the revolutionary nationalists, with the result that, within a decade, the British were able to break up the networks of such activities. Yet, while suppressing the revolutionaries, the British Government also devised a constitutional package — the so-called Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 — to secure the co-operation of Congress leaders, Moderates and Extremists, who fought for freedom without taking recourse to violence.

The Swadeshi Movement brought about seminal changes within the Congress. Two groups, to whom we have already referred as Moderates and Extremists, popularly called *Naram Dal* and *Garam Dal*, crystallized within the party in the course of the movement. The differences between these groups, which rested upon tactics rather than upon strategy, came to a head during the annual session of the Congress at Surat in 1907. However, the developments at Surat have not been properly interpreted by the historians of the national movement. It is significant that the Surat split came about at a time when a new generation of Indians had to be drawn into nationalist politics. Perhaps the extremist leaders, men like Tilak, Pal, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo, represented as much the aspirations of a new generation in the country as they represented the aspirations of new classes within Indian society. Such changes in leadership, as a new generation attains maturity, characterize the history of the Congress over the past century; and they explain the remarkable capacity of this party to remain in the mainstream of politics for a century. Indeed, this process of renewal highlights a strange paradox: the Congress — the oldest party in India — is also the youngest party in the country in its leadership as well as in its support base.

II

The years of World War I (1914-18) mark a seminal transformation in the leadership and support base of the Congress. When hostilities broke out in 1914, the Congress had not recovered from the split of 1907. After Surat, there were a number of attempts at bringing together Moderates and Extremists, none of them very successful. Perhaps a more significant development was the alienation of Muslim opinion from the British Government, largely as a result of the growing tension in European politics between Great Britain and Turkey, the dominant Islamic state at this stage.

The outbreak of war, however, rallied nationalist opinion in India around the defence of the British Empire. The leaders of the Congress pledged their support to Great Britain, in the belief that their plea for

political autonomy would be considered sympathetically by the British Government once hostilities come to an end. To reinforce this plea, these leaders were able to bring about substantial unity among different sections of opinion by 1916. Not only was the cleavage between Moderates and Extremists healed, but the Congress was able to persuade Muslim League leaders to jointly present to the British Government constitutional proposals seeking for India political autonomy within the British Empire.

At this juncture, a leader of epic stature staged his entry into nationalist politics in India. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had even prior to World War I attracted considerable attention through his struggle against racial bigotry in South Africa. More significantly, Gandhi had devised in the process a novel weapon of political agitation. The mahatma now sought to reshape the Congress in the image of his world-view. This is not the place to assess Satyagraha as a mode of political action and non-violence as the basis of the struggle for freedom in India. Such a task has been attempted elsewhere in the *Centenary History*. Yet a few salient facets of Gandhian ideology need to be highlighted here. Gandhi believed that all religions, shorn of ritual and cant, were capable of co-existing beneficially insofar as they sought to liberate humanity through truth and non-violence. He further believed that the social and the political domains were as valid arenas of religious activity as the spiritual domain. Indeed, the differentiation of the sacred from the profane, and the spiritual from the secular, had contributed substantively to the malaise which afflicted western society. Through equating the secular with the spiritual domain, it was possible to frame a strategy of political action which liberated the exploited at the same time as the exploiters. Within India, Gandhi believed that it was possible to conjure into existence a movement of national regeneration which would achieve the goal of swaraj at the same time as it revitalized the creative energy and reinforced the moral fibre of the people.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, he acquainted himself, as advised by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, with nationalist politics through a dialogue with the educated classes already active in the Congress and also by undertaking an extensive tour in the country. Gandhi had built an ashram at Ahmedabad to train a cadre of satyagrahis who would devote themselves to the reconstruction of Indian society on the basis of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

Notwithstanding his experiments in the revival of hand-spinning and weaving; the removal of untouchability; and national education; Gandhi was soon drawn into the vortex of Indian politics by events which constitute decisive landmarks in the history of our freedom struggle. Within the space of a few years, he led movements of the peasantry

at Champaran and Kheda; and a strike of the textile workers of Ahmedabad. Gandhi's association with these agitations provided him with an insight into the political temper of the popular classes.

By the time the limited Satyagraha experiments of Gandhi came to a successful conclusion, World War I ended. Jawaharlal Nehru summing up the situation at the time wrote:

And the peace, instead of bringing us relief and progress, brought us repressive legislation and martial law in the Punjab. A bitter sense of humiliation and a passionate anger filled our people. All the unending talk of constitutional reform and Indianization of the services was a mockery and an insult when the manhood of our country was crushed and the inexorable and continuous process of exploitation was deepening our poverty and sapping our vitality. We had become a derelict nation.¹

At this juncture Gandhi appeared on the national scene. Describing the advent of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. . . . The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya* (fearlessness), not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. . . . But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear — pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the money-lender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised: Be not afraid.

So, suddenly as it were, that black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. . . . It was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psycho-analytical methods had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.

Regarding Gandhi's entry into the Congress, Jawaharlal said:

Gandhi for the first time entered the Congress organization and immediately brought about a complete change in its constitution. He made it democratic and a mass organization. Democratic it had been previously also but it had so far been limited in franchise and restricted to the upper classes. Now the peasants rolled in and, in its new garb, it began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organization with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes. This agrarian character was to grow. Industrial workers also came in but as individuals and not in their separate organized capacity.²

The manner in which Gandhi was able to draw upon the aspirations of different communities and classes, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, the rich and the poor, capitalists and workers, zamindars and kisans, professional men and the intelligentsia, artisans and tribals, constitutes the theme of a number of contributions in the *Centenary History*. I do not propose to go over the ground already covered therein. However, it would be appropriate to focus upon some of the salient features of the anti-imperialist agitations organized by Gandhi in the first half of the 20th century. The most striking aspect of these agitations was the extent to which they succeeded in uniting different elements of Indian society. That these agitations rested upon non-violence; that as a result the sentiment of nationalism crystallized in new classes and communities; are some of the features of the Gandhian movements which need to be highlighted.

III

The transformation which Mahatma Gandhi brought about in the national movement was momentous in its implications for the relationship between British imperialism and Indian nationalism, on the one hand, and between different classes and communities within Indian society, on the other. Indeed, through the ideology of non-violence, Gandhi was able to change the very nature of the discourse between Great Britain and India as well as between different constituents of Indian society.

The changes which Gandhi wrought in nationalist politics were achieved without the loss of its former sources of support, namely, the intelligentsia, the gentry and the commercial classes. Nothing illustrates this better than the fiery enthusiasm with which Jawaharlal Nehru welcomed the advent of Gandhi and accepted satyagraha as the means of India's liberation. Nehru's stance reflected that of an entire generation of young Indians, who were deeply influenced by the liberal humanism of the West and ready to accept an ideology that would effect India's liberation through drawing the downtrodden classes into the struggle for freedom. Nehru saw in the mahatma a symbol of the rural classes and an assurance of their support for the freedom struggle. His political

relationship with Gandhi was shaped most of all by the influence which the mahatma exercised over the poor and the deprived, at the same time as he stimulated the admiration of the middle classes. Gandhi's influence over the intelligentsia was inseparable from his influence over the peasantry; and this relationship constituted a crucial underpinning of the freedom struggle.

Nevertheless, in a country as large and complex as India, the non-violent agitation could not be sustained indefinitely. Thus it soon became clear that the Non-Cooperation Movement which was launched with conspicuous success in 1920-21 was running into serious trouble as a sequel to suspension of mass satyagraha followed by Gandhiji's arrest and subsequent incarceration. The Government of Turkey had already abolished the office of Khilafat leaving the Indian Muslims in a quandry. There were indications that the communities which had come together under the mahatma's leadership were finding it difficult to continue agitation against the British raj. Even more significant were the eruptions of Mopla violence in Kerala, at the same time as the peasantry fought British imperialism non-violently under the leadership of Gandhi. To the mahatma such violence was reflected most vividly in the incident at Chauri Chaura in February 1922, which prompted him to call off the planned mass Civil Disobedience. The Viceroy, Lord Reading, heaved a sigh of relief with the remark that, 'Gandhi's programme came within an inch of success.'

The suspension of mass Civil Disobedience and the arrest and imprisonment of the Mahatma in 1922 was as traumatic an experience for the leaders of the Congress as it was for the people of India. Small wonder, then, that some senior leaders, after their release from prison, put forward at this juncture an altogether new strategy for the attainment of swaraj. Prominent among them were C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, and Hakim Ajmal Khan who sought to carry the battle of nationalism into the new legislatures which had been created by the Reforms of 1919. By breaking up the constitutional machinery devised by these reforms, the Swarajists sought to demonstrate the strength of nationalism in India.

A great battle was fought at the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922, presided over by C.R. Das. But the resolution for council entry was lost by an overwhelming majority. The Congress was divided between 'No-changers and Pro-changers'.

When Gandhi was released in 1924, he persuaded Congressmen to give full freedom to Das and the elder Nehru to carry out their experiment. He himself decided to devote all his energies to organizing a 'Constructive Programme' in order to prepare the rural mass of the people for the next satyagraha struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi had virtually retired from active leadership of the

Congress in 1925 leaving the political field to the Swaraj Party led by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru.

The AICC in its meeting held at Patna on 22 September 1925 resolved that, 'the work in connection with the Indian and Provincial Legislatures shall be carried on in accordance with the policy and programme laid down by the Swaraj Party.'

But there was already a significant body of opinion within the Swaraj Party which had always been opposed to the tactics of obstruction in the legislatures. The body was known as the Responsive Co-operation Party and included men like M.R. Jayakar, M.S. Aney, N.C. Kelkar, B.S. Moonje and others from Maharashtra.

The Swarajists succeeded for some time, in paralyzing the functioning of the legislatures. But before long the Swarajists' position, too, became untenable due to the success of the British Government in winning over individual members of the party to its standpoint, through the promise of office. Well before the erosion of Swarajist strength became an avalanche, however, Motilal Nehru and his followers walked out of the reformed legislatures to rejoin the mainstream within the Congress.

Perhaps a more enduring solution to the impasse was provided by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru discovered that socialism lent a novel meaning to the anti-imperialist struggle which Gandhi had initiated in 1920. A crucial question was whether the freedom movement was purely a political phenomenon; or whether it also involved a redistribution of social and economic power within Indian society. The socialist answer to this question was clear. The movement was as much concerned with social and economic objectives as with the attainment of freedom. For this reason, it was not only necessary to draw the masses into the struggle for freedom, but it was also necessary to assure them social equity when freedom was attained. Moreover, the national movement in India was not an isolated phenomenon; indeed, it was a part of the wider struggle which other colonial societies in Asia and Africa were also waging against European imperialism.

The dissemination of socialist ideas proceeded apace through the crusading zeal of Jawaharlal Nehru and other youthful leaders of the Congress, prominent among whom was Subhas Chandra Bose. These leaders were able to propagate a new consciousness among the intelligentsia, the working classes, and the peasantry as to how India could be liberated and Indian society reconstituted after liberation. Jawaharlal set out this vision with striking clarity in his writings after his return from Europe at the end of 1927, where, along with his father, he had paid a visit to Soviet Russia:

What are we driving at? Freedom? Swaraj? Independence? Dominion Status? Words which may mean much or little or nothing at all? Again, . . .

whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many a conflicting element?

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realization of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. . . .³

The Madras Congress in 1927 authorized its President M.A. Ansari to appoint an All-Party Committee to draft a constitution for India. Ansari appointed this committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru.

The report of the Nehru Committee was discussed at a conference in Lucknow in August 1928, and again in the All-Parties Convention in Calcutta in December 1928. In both places, it was evident that there were serious differences of opinion between different parties; yet all had tried to accommodate one another to the utmost in order to present an agreed solution.

Muslim separatism was by now firmly entrenched and cast its shadow over other sections of the population. Youth showed signs of drifting away, either to the Left or to a negation of non-violence, which was, with Gandhi, a creed, but with most Congressmen only a policy.

The first All-India Socialist Youth Congress was held in Calcutta on 27 December 1928 under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Several resolutions were passed, one of which is given below:

In the opinion of this Congress complete Independence and not Dominion Status is the immediate political objective of India not as an ideal but as the necessary preliminary to a communistic society and rejects altogether the Nehru Committee Report for the following among other principles, viz.:

That it allows the bourgeoisie to compromise with the British Imperialists by establishing the so-called Dominion Status which involves the safeguard of the vested interests, landowning, feudal and capitalist, and sacrifice the interests of the masses.⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose raised the demand of complete independence as the objective of the Congress. Gandhi, Motilal and other senior Congress leaders were sympathetic to this demand, but, for tactical reasons, they offered the British Government the space of a year to accept constitutional package which they had

fashioned in 1928, and which called for Dominion Status as the basis of India's position within the British Empire. But when the British Government turned a deaf ear to this demand, the Congress, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, at the historic session at Lahore in December 1929, approved of *purna swaraj* as the objective of a renewed struggle which was to be launched under the direction and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

As proposed by the Congress Working Committee, Mahatma Gandhi had met the viceroy on 23 December 1930, prior to the Lahore session of the Congress, with the object of giving him an ultimatum, calling for acceptance of the Calcutta Congress demand failing which civil disobedience would be launched. But a day earlier, an attempt was made to blow off the railway coach in which the viceroy was travelling to Delhi. Luckily he escaped. Earlier, a bomb had been thrown into the chamber of Central Assembly. In fact, since the arrival of Simon Commission and the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, as a result of police lathi blows, the political atmosphere was surcharged with violence.

Commenting on the series of violent events Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

Take now the positive side of the argument. When, that is in 1920, non-violence came to be a part of the Congress creed the Congress became a transformed body as if by magic. Mass awakening came no one knows how. Even remote villages were stirred. Many abuses seemed to have been swept away. The people became conscious of their power. They ceased to fear authority. The system of *begar* (forced labour) vanished like mist in Almora and several other parts of India, wherever the people had become awakened to a sense of the power that lay within themselves. Such as it was, it was their freedom that they had attained by their own strength. . . . It was true Swaraj of the masses attained by the masses. If the march of non-violence had not been interrupted by events culminating in Chauri Chaura, I make bold to say that we would have been today in full possession of Swaraj.

Giving a warning against violence Mahatma said:

We are now entering upon a new era. Our immediate objective and not our distant goal is complete independence. Is it not obvious that if we are to evolve the true spirit of independence amongst the millions, we shall only do so through non-violence and all it implies? It is not enough that we drive out Englishmen by making their lives insecure through secret violence. That would lead not to independence but to utter confusion. We can establish independence only by adjusting our differences through an appeal to the head and the heart, by evolving organic unity amongst ourselves, not by terrorizing or killing those who, we fancy, may impede our march, but by patient and gentle handling, by converting the oppo-

nent, we want to offer mass civil disobedience. Everybody owns that it is a certain remedy. Everybody understands that 'civil' here means strictly non-violent, and has it not often been demonstrated that mass civil disobedience is an impossibility without mass non-violence and without mass discipline? Surely it does not require an appeal to our religious faith to convince us that the necessity of our situation, if nothing else, demands non-violence of the limited type I have indicated. Let those who are not past reason then cease either secretly or openly to endorse activities such as this latest bomb outrage. Rather let them openly and heartily condemn these outrages, so that our deluded patriots may, for want of nourishment to their violent spirit, realize the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activity has every time done.⁵

For the attainment of *purna swaraj* Gandhi pointed out that:

The greatest and the most effective sanction, however, is civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. Whilst the task of choosing the time and the method of it has been nominally and properly left to the All-India Congress Committee to decide, I know that it is a duty primarily devolving upon me. I must confess that I do not see the atmosphere for it today. I want to discover a formula whereby sufficient provision can be made for avoiding suspension by reason of Chauri Chaura. A time must come when there may be a fight to the finish with one's back to the wall. . . . I can only give the impatient patriot the assurance, that I am concentrating all my powers on discovering a workable formula. He can help me materially by assisting to promote a non-violent atmosphere and to push forward the constructive programme. I know that many have refused to see any connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience. But for one who believes in non-violence it does not need hard thinking to realize the essential connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience for Swaraj. . . . For such an indefinable thing as Swaraj people must have previous training in doing things of all-India interest. Such work must throw together the people and their leaders whom they would trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. Constructive work, therefore, is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for an army designed for bloody warfare. Individual civil disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail, and mass civil disobedience is an impossibility.⁶

The breaking of the Salt Law began on 12 March 1930, when Gandhi started on a 241-mile trek from Sabarmati towards the sea with a band of 79 associates. Careful preparations were made all over India for breach of this law, as well as of ordinances prohibiting peaceful processions and peaceful picketing of shops dealing in liquor or in foreign cloth. The whole of India watched with bated breath; and when the signal was given by Gandhi's symbolic breach of the Salt Law on the seashore on 6

April 1930, the whole country plunged into the campaign with unexampled enthusiasm.

The success was phenomenal. There was hardly any breach of non-violent discipline, and, altogether, during the duration of the campaign, nearly a hundred thousand of people suffered imprisonment, while during the Non-cooperation Movement the number had been of the order of 30,000.

An important feature of the Salt Satyagraha was an audacious step designed by Gandhi during the later stages of the campaign. When the government had almost settled down into the routine programme of imprisoning volunteers, or of manhandling them and a kind of stalemate seemed to have overtaken the campaign, Gandhi altered his tactics. In order to invite the government to do its worst, he designed 'non-violent raids' on the salt godowns of Dharasana and Wadala.⁷ The invitation to the government was now, not merely to imprison, but also to shoot.

However, in the face of these tactics, the government did not actually shoot, but took measures to beat off the advancing satyagrahis. Shooting satyagrahis who were unarmed, and in the sight of numerous European and American newspapermen who had come to witness the strange scene, would have lowered their reputation considerably. And this is something they were anxious to avoid. But where conditions could be controlled by military censors, there was no dearth of situations where British soldiers did not hesitate to shoot straight with the intention to kill.⁸

The movement gained countrywide momentum and obliged the British Government to bring into full play the instruments of repression at its command. Yet a movement which defied the British raj non-violently seriously weakened the fabric of British rule over India, and undermined the morale of the civil services which were the instruments of this rule. Indeed, the British Government was under such enormous pressure that the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, invited Gandhi for negotiations in a bid to buy peace. The incorrigible Winston Churchill voiced the distress of an entire generation of Tory imperialists when he expressed his disgust at the spectacle of 'the half naked faqir' parleying with Irwin. These negotiations led to a truce, under which Irwin persuaded the Mahatma to participate in discussions in Great Britain designed to shape a new constitution for India.

As was expected, Gandhi was unable to gain much from the Round Table Conference held in London in 1931, and he landed back at Bombay empty-handed. His prominent colleagues Jawaharlal Nehru, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others had already been arrested and imprisoned. The Congress Working Committee advised their countrymen to launch

mass civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. Gandhi was arrested on 4 January 1932 and this was followed by countrywide resumption of mass civil disobedience. More than a hundred thousand satyagrahis were arrested. Lathi charges and firing became the order of the day. The non-violent struggle continued for over two years. In UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh it took the form of no-rent satyagraha where thousands of peasants were dispossessed of their land.

The British response to 1932-3 Civil Disobedience Movement was a new constitution which was adopted in 1935. This constitution marks an important stage in the growth of the national movement, although we are unable to endorse the view of some historians that the Act of 1935 was a statesmanlike initiative on the part of the British Government. According to these scholars, the constitution of 1935 reflected the recognition by the British Government of three articulate political forces in India; the great body of Hindu opinion organized under the aegis of the Congress; the minorities, more particularly the Muslim and the untouchable communities, which stood outside the framework of the Congress; and the Princely States, whose subjects were largely untouched by the leaven of nationalism. The Act of 1935, these historians further argue, brought together the three discordant forces into an effective polity. Our perception of the constitution of 1935 differs radically from that of such scholars. The federal polity envisaged by the constitution, so we believe, was an instrument designed to provide British control over India with a durable basis. It sought to do so through creating a federal government subject to imperial control, while nationalism expended itself in managing the autonomous provinces of British India.

Although the leaders of the Congress had serious reservations about the Act of 1935, they decided, after some initial hesitation, to contest the elections to the provincial legislatures held under its aegis, if only to demonstrate the support they enjoyed with the popular classes. Indeed, both the strength and the weaknesses of the Congress were fully demonstrated by the provincial elections of 1937. In six provinces of British India, which had a Hindu majority, Congress candidates won clear victories. In the rest, where the Muslims had a majority, or constituted a very substantial proportion of the population, the majority of votes went, not to the Muslim League but to regional parties which did not fully accept the policies of the Congress.

The problems facing the provincial Congress governments which came to power in 1937 were by no means easy of resolution. So far as the British Government was concerned, it welcomed official acceptance by the Congress as a means of persuading that body to expend its energies in the provincial arena, from where (so the British believed) it had little

prospect of contesting the over-arching dominance of imperial power. For the principal leaders of the Congress — Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and Rajendra Prasad — the behaviour of the provincial Congress governments was a test of the ability of the provincial nationalist leaders to keep their strategic objectives firmly in focus while at the same time working to redeem their election pledges to the people.

The outbreak of war in 1939 did not catch the leaders of the Congress wholly unprepared. Since the time Jawaharlal Nehru had visited Europe in 1927, to attend an anti-imperialist conference, he had maintained contact with the socialist leaders of Europe as well as with the leaders of liberation movements elsewhere in Asia and Africa. He had also watched with concern the growth of fascism in Italy and in Germany. Repeatedly, in the course of the 1930s, the Congress adopted resolutions condemning the passivity of the capitalist democracies — particularly Great Britain and France — in the face of increasing fascist aggression in Europe and elsewhere. The Congress, as the representative of the people of India, not only distanced itself from the policy of appeasement pursued by Great Britain and France in the 1930s, but it also expressed sympathy for the victims of fascist terror. The leaders of the Congress believed, however, that the people of India could not participate in any war between the capitalist democracies and the fascist powers, until they were liberated, and joined an anti-fascist alliance as a *free* rather than as an *enslaved* people.

In view of the Congress stance upon the issue of war, the decision of the British Government to declare India a belligerent power in September 1939 was a serious mistake. To demonstrate their resentment of this step, the Congress ministries in the provinces where the party had won a majority in 1937 tendered their resignations. After this gesture of disapproval, the Congress leaders reviewed the national and the international scene, in order to devise an appropriate programme of political action. The situation was, of course, an exceedingly complex one. Prominent leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru looked upon Nazi Germany with extreme hostility; and they did not want to embark upon any step which would weaken the anti-fascist struggle in Europe. At the same time, Subhas Chandra Bose was aiming to liberate India with the help of the fascist powers. Besides, a majority within the Congress believed that popular sentiment for decisive action against British imperialism could not be lightly brushed aside. Above all others stood Mahatma Gandhi, second to none in his opposition to fascism, acutely sensitive to opinion within India, yet firmly opposed to wars, as wars failed to solve the problems which caused them.

The reconciliation of these differing viewpoints was no easy matter.

The Congress leadership decided to demand from the British Government a declaration of its war aims, more particularly as they applied to subject nations like India. When, in August 1940, the British Government replied through a statement which sought to exploit cleavages within Indian society, the leaders of the Congress realized that the time for action had arrived. In December 1940, therefore, they initiated yet another non-violent campaign against British imperialism; though in deference to the anti-fascist war in progress in Europe, this campaign was to be fought through individual rather than collective satyagraha.

In the meanwhile the fortunes of war turned increasingly against Great Britain in Europe as well as in Asia. After the fall of Poland, Nazi Germany turned westwards to vanquish France. Japan, too, took this opportunity to establish her supremacy over Southeast Asia. First Indo-China, then Indonesia and Malaysia, and finally Burma fell into the hands of the Japanese armies. By the spring of 1942, the Japanese stood on the frontiers of India, seemingly poised for an invasion of the subcontinent.

The prospect of a Japanese invasion obliged both the British Government and the Congress to reformulate their stances towards each other. Not surprisingly, there were some differences among the Congress leaders as to the manner in which the situation was to be handled. Gandhi, despite his opposition to Japanese fascism, was not willing to advocate violent methods to defend the integrity of India. So far as the mahatma was concerned, the country could best be defended through a scorched earth policy and mass non-cooperation against the Japanese invaders. On the other hand, Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad wanted to actively organize the people for the armed defence of the country against a possible Japanese invasion. Notwithstanding these differences, all nationalist leaders wanted the British to leave India and thus enable her people to defend their country and contribute to the global struggle against fascism. The British Government, on its part, looked upon the prospect of a Japanese invasion of India with alarm, more particularly, if they had to contend simultaneously with a hostile population in the subcontinent. The British were also being urged by President Roosevelt to draw nationalist forces in India into the war effort against fascism through a policy of concessions. As a result of this, the Imperial Government sent Stafford Cripps to India in an attempt to persuade the leaders of the Congress to participate in the anti-fascist struggle, on the basis of an assurance that India would be granted freedom after the conclusion of hostilities. However, Cripps brought with him proposals which laid the door open for the balkanization of the subcontinent. The leaders of the Congress, therefore, treated these proposals as wholly unacceptable.

While the Cripps' proposals were rejected, popular sentiment for a determined assault upon British imperialism ran extremely high. As a result of this, the leaders of the Congress adopted, at a crucial session in Bombay in August 1942, a resolution demanding that the British quit India. The 'Quit India' resolution signified the grim determination of the Congress to embark upon a life and death struggle for the liberation of India. The British Government, however, was equally determined to be tough and ruthless. All the senior Congress leaders in Bombay were put under arrest, and similar arrests were carried out in the provincial cities and district towns.

Mahatma Gandhi had warned the people that Quit India Movement would be short and swift. There would be mass participation of the people. Each one would be his or her own guide. The government would resort to brutal and ruthless repression. People would have to face the challenge non-violently, in a spirit of 'Do or Die'.

The arrest of the Congress leaders triggered off a massive popular upsurge throughout India. In all the metropolitan cities, provincial capitals and district towns the people rose in revolt against the British Government. In large parts of India the centres of British administrative power were overthrown and, for the space of a few weeks, British rule ceased to exist. Indeed, non-violent means succeeded in establishing parallel administrations in some districts in Bengal, U.P., Orissa and Maharashtra. The British raj seemed to be in real danger of being overthrown.

Despite the initial success of the Quit India Movement, the British Government succeeded, through prompt use of the armed forces at its disposal in quelling the popular uprising. Just before this rising, the British had deployed substantial forces on the Indo-Burmese border to check a possible Japanese invasion. During August and September 1942, approximately ninety per cent of these forces were redeployed to quell the popular upsurge against the British raj. The suppression of the uprising of 1942 was as brutal an affair as the suppression of the uprising of 1857. Thousands of unarmed Satyagrahis were shot down and tens of thousands were incarcerated in British prisons. By the end of the year, the peace of the graveyard prevailed over India, bearing mute testimony to a mighty struggle for freedom on the part of the people, as well as to the ferocity with which the British Government had quelled it.

For the next two years, as all its leaders of any importance were in prison, there was no organized agitation on the part of the Congress. In the meanwhile, largely because of the reverses which the Nazi armies suffered in the Soviet Union, the fortunes of war tilted in favour of the Allied powers. On 6 June 1944, a joint US-British Expeditionary Force landed in Normandy, and gradually pushed back the Nazi armies.

Within a year, Germany faced an invasion by Soviet armies from the east and Anglo-American armies from the west. It was clear that the collapse of Hitler's Reich was merely a matter of time. One of the most horrifying wars in human history thus concluded in the west in victory for the forces of socialism and democracy in the world.

The triumph of socialism and democracy over fascism greatly strengthened the national movement in India. In the summer of 1945, the British people elected the Labour Party to power. The leaders of this party, men like Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps and Lord Pethick Lawrence, were inclined to take a sympathetic view of Indian aspirations. Perhaps their altruism was also related to the strength of the national movement in India under the leadership of the Congress. Indeed, it was clear to the Labour government that it could hold on to India only through brute force, a prospect which was unlikely to be endorsed by the war-weary people of Great Britain.

However, the task of disengagement from India was one beset with serious difficulties. As suggested earlier, the British always sought to maintain overarching control, even after provincial autonomy had been conferred upon the country. To realise this objective, the British had extended support to the minorities as well as to the Princely States. When they surveyed the Indian scene in 1945 and 1946, they discovered that the support they had extended to the minorities, particularly to the Muslims, had created a powerful entity in the Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The strength of this party lay in the religious passions which it stirred up in the country; and through exploiting the sentiment of communalism, the League was able to win a majority of Muslim seats in the election of 1946. Although the strength of the League rested upon a consciousness which held no place in a modern polity, it nevertheless conferred upon Jinnah a powerful position in the constitutional deliberations. Indeed, the elections of 1946 were a prelude to the partition of the country.

The British Government made one last bid through a Cabinet Mission to hammer out proposals seeking to create a three-tiered polity with a confederal centre at New Delhi. The details of this scheme and the reaction which it evoked in different circles constitute the subject of an important chapter in the *Centenary History*. Suffice it to mention here that the Cabinet Mission proposals satisfied neither the leaders of the Congress nor those of the League. Perhaps the Congress leaders, with their commitment to a centralized polity in India, feared that a confederal constitution would be merely a prelude to the balkanization of the subcontinent.

To resolve the dilemma, Clement Attlee appointed Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India with plenipotentiary powers to resolve the constitu-

tional impasse. The new viceroy assumed office with a great reputation for dynamism and tact in negotiations. Moreover, during his tenure as the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in South-East Asia, he had gained a sensitive insight into the strength of Asian nationalism. In a short span of time, he was able to establish relations of confidence with the leaders of the Congress and other parties. Mountbatten put before the Indian leadership a plan for the partition of India and the creation of two autonomous dominions from the provinces of British India. The 563 Princely States, needless to say, were free to opt for union with either of these two dominions. The Mountbatten Plan, as it is popularly known, was a bitter pill for the Congress leaders to swallow; since from the very outset they fervently believed in the unity of the country. However, it became clear to Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others that the price of independence was the partition of the country. On 3 June 1947, therefore, the leaders of the Congress signalled their acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan, whereby two new dominions were to come into existence on 15 August 1947.

On the midnight of 14 August, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke in the Constituent Assembly of the prospect before the new nation: 'Long years ago', he stated, 'we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the services of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.'⁹

IV

15 August 1947 marked the culmination of one phase and the commencement of another in the history of modern India. After a long struggle against British imperialism, the leaders of the Congress had succeeded in creating an independent polity in India. The struggle for freedom was a popular movement, in which hundreds of thousands of men and women, drawn from different classes and communities, had fought for the liberation of the sub-continent. But the dawn of freedom also brought its share of tragedy. Since its genesis in 1885, the Congress had stood above all for the unity of India. Yet the full realization of this ideal eluded the Congress during the final years of the British raj. The provincial elections of 1946 had made it clear that, with some exceptions, Muslim communities in the north-west and north-east were unwilling to support the vision of a united India. As a result of this, two sovereign

dominions, India and Pakistan, emerged through the vivisection of British India in August 1947.

The historical literature on the national movement offers a number of explanations for the partition of the subcontinent. We do not propose to review this literature in the present context. Suffice it to mention here that the ethnic diversity of India, and the differing worldviews of the religious communities in the subcontinent, were among the factors which contributed to this phenomenon. Yet, any review of weaknesses in the social fabric of India does not fully explain the birth of Pakistan. Nor is partition to be explained wholly through the exploitation of such cleavages by the British. That the British Government exploited weaknesses in the social fabric to reinforce its position can be readily conceded. However, what the British desired above all was enduring economic and strategic control over the subcontinent, as a unified polity, rather than its break-up into two autonomous states. Nevertheless, the support which the British Government extended to the leaders of the Muslim League, with the objective of weakening nationalism, created a situation which resulted in the break-up of British India into the dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947.

Whatever be the reasons behind the partition of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the Prime Minister of the Dominion of India, faced problems of terrifying magnitude as a result of it when he assumed office on 15 August. The most pressing of these was the problem of communal strife, resulting in the dislocation of tens of millions of people in the subcontinent. Even prior to August 1947, Jinnah had incidentally mentioned the possibility of exchange of populations between India and Pakistan. But the numbers that would be involved in such an exchange were so enormous that no one considered this possibility seriously.

However, there was such bitter hostility between Hindus and Muslims after August 1947, that Hindus trapped in the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in Pakistan; and Muslims residing in the state of East Punjab (India); found it impossible to live with dignity in the new dominions where they constituted minorities. The bitter communal warfare forced millions of Hindus and Sikhs to migrate to India; and similarly, millions of Muslims left India to take shelter in the new dominion of Pakistan. The energies of the two infant states, India and Pakistan, in the first few months after their creation, were fully stretched in order to rehabilitate the refugees who sought shelter within their frontiers.

Perhaps nobody felt the tragedy of communal warfare more keenly than Mahatma Gandhi. Indeed, the last phase of his life was devoted wholly to the task of persuading Hindus and Muslims, in India and in Pakistan, to live peacefully with each other. The mahatma's martyrdom, on 30 January 1948, at the hands of a communal fanatic, was his last and

greatest offering at the altar of communal harmony. Thus ended the epic life of the greatest Indian since the Buddha. We are so near to the mahatma in time, that it is not easy for us to assess his true stature; or to evaluate his place in history. Nevertheless, the leadership which he offered to the people of India, in their struggle against British imperialism, places him among the truly outstanding figures of the 20th century. Nor were his activities confined to the political domain. By articulating the traditional values of Indian civilization in the changing context of the 20th century, he provided the people of India with the moral and cultural resilience without which they would have found it difficult to acquire a new national identity. Small wonder, then, that he is widely regarded as the father of the Indian nation.

With the martyrdom of the mahatma, and the consequent stilling of communal passions, the way was open for the adoption of a new constitution by the people of India. Yet before this could be done, some crucial issues had to be resolved: What would be the structure of the polity in New Delhi? How would this be related to the provincial governments? What was the place which the erstwhile Princely States would occupy in the new order? How would rights of property and individual liberties be defined in the proposed constitution? How, once again, would the great minorities be drawn into a creative relationship with the major community in the subcontinent? These were some of the questions which were debated in the Constituent Assembly before it framed a new political system. India, it was decided, was to be a republic resting upon adult franchise; and the citizen would enjoy rights and bear responsibilities comparable to his rights and obligations under other liberal constitutions. The structure of governance in New Delhi was to be unitary. Yet the founding fathers recognized that a polity of India's complexity required centres of governance in the provinces (or the states, as they were now termed) no less powerful than the one envisaged in New Delhi. The new constitution, therefore, envisaged governments in the states which were endowed with substantial powers as well as considerable resources. The sagacity of the constitution framers is amply reflected in the fact that India is a functioning democracy in 1985, with a record of elections which have enabled the people to exercise free choice in determining who should preside over the government.

The constitution of India has many novel features, but the most striking feature is the right of franchise it bestows on every adult in the country. The first general elections held under the new constitution, in 1952, were to a great leap into the dark. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress leaders, although they presided over a party which had been the principal force behind the freedom struggle, had little indication of how they would fare electorally. A number of parties, ranging from the Hindu

Mahasabha to the Communist Party, had jumped into the fray. The leaders of the Congress were apprehensive that the parties of the right, which were inclined to appeal to the electorate on the basis of religious sentiment, would offer the most formidable challenge. However, the results of the election showed that, although communalism was far from dead, economic issues — the problems of poverty and social deprivation — would henceforth loom large upon the political horizon. The Congress secured 354 seats out of 469 in the Lok Sabha, and also won majorities in all the states. The most powerful opposition groups were the parties of the left, which offered radical (to the point of being impractical) solutions to the people's problems.

The results of the first general elections made it clear to Jawaharlal Nehru that the crucial issue before the country was the economic reconstruction of society along lines which would ensure a measure of material dignity and social equity to the humblest in the land.

The radical policies, which Jawaharlal Nehru now initiated, had been anticipated in the industrial policy resolution of 1948, wherein the state proclaimed its decision to control the 'commanding heights of the economy' through reserving for itself some of the seminal areas of economic activity, like the fabrication of steel, the generation of power, and the establishment of a machine tool industry. To give practical shape to this policy, Jawaharlal instituted a Planning Commission, which was vested with the responsibility of devising an overall economic strategy for India. The crux of planning, as it developed in India over the next few years, related to the creation of a publicly owned heavy industry sector, around which core the planners contemplated the growth of consumer industries, through the initiative of private capital; and the growth also of handicrafts, through the enterprise of small scale producers.

By the middle of the 1960s, Jawaharlal Nehru had brought about remarkable changes in the industrial and agrarian economy of India. Behind these changes stood a party which had been greatly strengthened as an instrument of social transformation.

The continuing popularity of the Congress was vividly reflected in the second general elections held in 1957. As before, the Congress secured a massive victory at the polls, winning 366 out of 483 seats in the Lok Sabha. Through the support which they extended to Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress, the people of India firmly endorsed the progressive measures which had been initiated with the object of creating a modern industrial and agricultural economy. All this was reaffirmed at the Avadi session of the Congress, where a solemn decision was taken to build a socialist order in India.

Besides the social and economic reforms which he initiated within India, Jawaharlal Nehru also strove to place the country's relations with

the world community on a durable basis. Even before 1947, he had attempted to establish a link between the liberation movement of India and those of other colonial societies in Asia and Africa. For what is now termed the Third World to take its rightful place in the international community, Jawaharlal Nehru believed that it needed a world-view of its own; and India, with her classical heritage so eloquently rearticulated in the 20th century by Mahatma Gandhi, could contribute substantially to the shaping of a distinctive ethos for the resurgent nations of Asia and Africa. The concept of non-alignment, the belief that it was incumbent upon developing countries to reflect their distinctive personality in a world polarized between the capitalist and the socialist blocs, grew out of such considerations. These ideas attracted wide support from the people of India; and they were destined to become a powerful force in international relations during the next few decades.

In reflecting upon the human condition in the 1950s, Jawaharlal Nehru felt that some of the perennial problems of war and peace had acquired a new urgency because of the existence of nuclear weapons. Wars had been accepted earlier as a legitimate means of resolving human problems. But it was no longer valid to do so. 'Thus, violence cannot possibly lead today to a solution of any major problem because violence has become much too terrible and destructive,' Jawaharlal Nehru observed. 'The moral approach to the question [of war or peace] has now been powerfully reinforced by the practical aspect.'¹⁰ In this area, India had a special message for the rest of humanity. The Mahatma had initiated a great transformation within Indian society through non-violence; but there was reason to believe that problems between sovereign states, too, could be resolved through the ideology of non-violence.

The vision of the world community which Jawaharlal delineated with such sensitivity guided in particular India's relations with China. Like India, China had gone through the experience of exploitation by imperialism. Over and above this experience, there were longstanding ties which linked the civilization of India with that of China. For these reasons, Jawaharlal Nehru strove to establish relations of utmost cordiality with China. Perhaps the issue of Tibet was the first testing ground for the two great nations of Asia. Jawaharlal reacted to the assumption by China of control over Tibet with rare magnanimity. He also seized the opportunity to lay down the five principles of co-existence between sovereign states, which became the fundamental basis of the non-aligned movement.

Despite Jawaharlal Nehru's generosity towards China over Tibet, his gesture was probably interpreted as a sign of weakness, if not worse. For, soon afterwards, the Chinese Government started putting forward

the most extraordinary claims upon Indian territories along the Himalayas. These claims were backed by the armed intervention of Chinese troops; and in Ladakh, the Chinese built a strategic highway which made a serious encroachment upon Indian territory. The earlier 'cartographic aggression' of China had dealt a blow to the friendly relations which Jawaharlal Nehru had tried to build with Peking over the years. Nevertheless, the government and the people of India took the view that the border problem could be resolved through peaceful negotiations. But the Chinese Government obviously thought otherwise. In the autumn of 1962, Chinese armies suddenly struck across the Himalayan border and seized hold of thousands of square kilometres of Indian territory.

The Chinese invasion of India was as humiliating as it was unexpected. Yet Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress and the people of India emerged from the ordeal stronger than ever. This was largely due to the manner in which different classes and communities came together at their country's hour of peril. A united nation set about the task of repairing the damage wrought by the military reverses along the Himalaya; and in a matter of a few months, India had recovered fully from the shock which it sustained in the winter of 1962.

Jawaharlal Nehru's health was now well past its prime. Yet he turned to the task of revitalizing the Congress, and making it an instrument for the social transformation of India, with a zeal that would have done credit to a statesman half his age. During the last year of his life he held out once again the message of socialism before the people of India. Only through socialism could India realize material prosperity at the same time as she achieved equity for the poor and the deprived. Under his inspiring leadership, the Congress turned anew to the task of eradicating poverty and building a strong and self-reliant nation.

On 27 May 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru passed away, deeply mourned by the people of India and indeed by mankind as a whole. His achievements over a life of seven decades and more were truly remarkable. As a fiery young nationalist, he had joined the Congress and participated in the freedom struggle under the aegis of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet he soon outgrew the influence of the mahatma and, by disseminating socialism among the members of the Congress, he radically transformed the ideological climate of the national movement. Indeed, when India was liberated in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru's socialist vision became the basis of a programme for transforming India into a modern industrial society, in which economic growth was married with social equity in finely balanced proportions. In the history of India, Jawaharlal Nehru stands among those rare statesmen who strove to bring about an epic change in the country. His commitment to the cause of peace, in a world

threatened with nuclear devastation, was perhaps unrivalled among international statesmen who were his contemporaries.

V

The death of Jawaharlal Nehru removed a towering figure from the stage of Indian politics. Yet the Congress proved itself fully worthy of the trust which the nation reposed in it by electing Lal Bahadur Shastri, a politician with wide experience, as the new prime minister. The problem of succession rarely lends itself to easy resolution; and the manner in which the Congress tackled the issue demonstrated the maturity which it had attained within a brief span of time as a ruling party.

Nevertheless, the tasks which awaited resolution at the hands of Lal Bahadur Shastri were truly formidable, both in their magnitude and in their complexity. Within the country, the programmes of social and economic development initiated by his predecessor needed to be revitalized, if the dream of a self-sufficient India was to be realized. Outside the country, a hostile China and an unfriendly Pakistan promised turbulent weather ahead for the new prime minister. Yet the choice of Lal Bahadur Shastri was fully vindicated by the purposeful manner in which he tackled the problems facing the nation. At the outset, Shastri proclaimed his commitment to the principles of socialism which had informed the Congress since the 1930s; and which inspired the domestic as well as the foreign policies of Jawaharlal Nehru. Next, the prime minister turned to the vital task of generating a new vigour in rural society. It appeared that, despite the land reforms of the 1950s, the rural economy needed a new boost if agricultural production was to suffice for the growing population of the country. Shastri took the first tentative steps towards initiating a new strategy of rural development, which reached fruition under his successor, and became the basis of a regime of plenty in the land.

While Shastri was battling to resolve the economic problems which faced the country, Pakistan decided to strike a deadly blow at India. The rulers of Pakistan, taking their cue from China, advanced claims to Indian territory in Gujarat and initiated military action to realize these claims. However, it soon became clear that the manoeuvre in Gujarat was merely a diversionary tactic. In the autumn of 1965, Pakistan initiated military aggression against Kashmir with a view to conquering it. Shastri, with full support from the Congress and the people, demonstrated to all and sundry that India would fight with all the resources at its command to defend its territorial integrity. The Indian armies not only counter-attacked in Kashmir but, to seize the initiative from Pakistan, executed a limited military move across the Punjab border. This

move succeeded in halting the aggression by Pakistan and, after a brief period of hostilities, both the countries agreed to a cease-fire.

The military action of 1965 was a great triumph for Shastri, for the Congress and for the people of India. Pakistan had struck at a moment when India appeared to be weak. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Shastri and the Congress, the people of India demonstrated their ability to withstand aggression, whatever be its point of origin. After the cessation of hostilities, a number of countries offered their good offices to India and Pakistan. But the leaders of the two countries considered it appropriate to accept Soviet mediation. The Tashkent conference flowed from this acceptance; and an agreement was worked out at this conference satisfactory to all concerned. While the people of India were preparing to extend a hero's welcome to Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had grown enormously in popular esteem, they learnt of his sudden demise at Tashkent on 10 January 1966.

VI

The death of Lal Bahadur Shastri once again posed before the Congress, and the people of India, the question of succession to the office of prime minister. Rarely had a party been called upon to resolve the leadership issue twice in so brief a span of time. Yet the leaders of the Congress proved themselves fully capable of handling this difficult situation. However, unlike in 1964, certain differences soon became evident in the party as to who should succeed Shastri. Some of the leaders of the Congress, particularly those inclined to a conservative view of politics, looked upon Morarji Desai as the most appropriate choice. As against this, a very large section of the radical leaders favoured the candidature of Indira Gandhi, who had demonstrated remarkable political skills as President of the Congress in 1959. The leadership of the Congress in 1966, therefore, was contested between Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai, and the former won the election with a comfortable margin.

Although Indira Gandhi had a majority of the Congress behind her in 1966, the conservative leaders who had backed Morarji Desai did not give up the contest for supremacy. Between her election to supreme office in 1966 and the general elections of 1967, Indira Gandhi faced a number of challenges to her position as the leader of the party and the nation. The divided state in which the party went to the polls in 1967 was also reflected in the results of the election. In contrast to the comfortable majorities which the Congress had won in the first three elections held after independence, it secured only 280 out of 523 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1967.

The strength of the Congress in the post-1967 Lok Sabha enabled it to

function as the party in power. Yet it was clear to Indira Gandhi and her supporters that the situation called for radical measures. A new bond of trust and confidence had to be forged between the people and the Congress if the country was to sustain the progress which it had achieved during the first decade and a half of independence. The forging of such a link called for a consummation which would carry the transformation of Indian society to a new qualitative level. Substantial sections of society — the tribal and Harijan communities; the poorer sections of the peasantry; the industrial working class and the artisan communities; and the minorities — had profited only marginally from the economic growth which the country had achieved since 1947. If the poor and the deprived could be persuaded that the Congress stood for their interests, then the party would once again acquire the popular support which it needed for eradicating poverty and stimulating progress. Needless to say, the crystallization of such radical policies meant a reactivation of the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in the altered circumstances of the late 1960s.

The new mood of the Congress was reflected in a crucial session of AICC held in 1969. In voicing her views before the party, Indira Gandhi outlined a programme of social transformation which frontally attacked a wide range of vested interests within Indian society. She envisaged the abolition of princely privilege and the nationalization of banks as preliminary steps to an assault upon the sources of poverty and deprivation in the country. The radical leadership within the Congress immediately supported her programme, as one which would fortify the party in the eyes of the people, as the great instrument of social transformation in India. At the same time, the conservative leadership of the party broke away into a political formation which increasingly lost touch with the mood of the people.

The radical stance adopted by Indira Gandhi in 1969 became the basis of a series of policies seeking to stimulate the creative energy of the poor and the deprived and to introduce a new era of development in the country. Perhaps the most striking feature of these policies pertained to the rural economy, since the country had been facing actual shortages in food, partly due to failures of the harvest and partly also due to increase in population. Within the span of half a decade, Indira Gandhi's agrarian policies enabled the country to become self-sufficient in food production and even generate surpluses which were stocked in public granaries as a guarantee against future shortages.

With a series of remarkable successes to back her, Indira Gandhi went to the polls in 1971 on the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' or 'Eradicate Poverty'. The people again demonstrated their confidence in her leadership, as well as in the party over which she presided, by extending enthusiastic

support to the Congress. Out of a total of 525 seats in the Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 355. The electoral victory of 1971 was a clear indication that the country was fully behind Indira Gandhi in her efforts to improve the lot of the poor and the deprived; and that her policies, aimed at eradicating poverty, enjoyed the support of an over-whelming majority in the country.

The popularity which Indira Gandhi and the Congress enjoyed with the people was extended to the full in the crisis which soon erupted along the north-eastern frontiers of India. The province of East Pakistan (as it was called in 1971) was in a state of acute ferment for a number of reasons. Since its emergence in 1947, the rulers of Pakistan had treated the eastern wing very shabbily, concentrating all resources and development activity in the western wing. Over and above this, the people of the region had a number of grievances arising out of the cavalier fashion in which the regional language and culture were treated by the ruling classes of Pakistan. Altogether, a powerful movement for liberation grew up in East Pakistan under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Yet the rulers of Pakistan were totally unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of this movement. Indeed, in 1971, as the demand for freedom gathered momentum, they unleashed a reign of terror in the eastern wing of Pakistan, literally forcing millions of Bengalis to seek shelter in India.

The crisis in East Pakistan posed Indira Gandhi a serious challenge. It was clear that India could not stand unconcerned while the aspirations of the East Bengalis were crushed under foot by the ruling establishment of Pakistan, which drew its strength from the western wing. This was all the more so because the millions of refugees who had poured into India literally threatened to wreck the economy, unless a way was found to repatriate them to their homeland.

The Bangladesh crisis evoked from Indira Gandhi statesmanship of a very high order. The strength of this statesmanship lay in the support which she received from the people. No less important was the support that the Soviet Union extended to India, through a treaty of friendship which henceforth became the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. At the very moment when an army of liberation — the *Mukti Bahini* — initiated hostilities against Pakistani occupation forces in the eastern wing, the Indian Army also took upon itself the task of ending the tyranny of the rulers of Pakistan. A short military campaign brought Pakistan to its knees; and the new state of Bangladesh was born amidst universal rejoicing.

The liberation of Bangladesh, which followed closely upon the electoral victory of 1971, put Indira Gandhi and the Congress in a powerful position. The momentum for progress, which the prime minister had

generated in 1969, was now augmented through a resounding victory at the polls and also through a magnificent success in restructuring the balance of power in South Asia in a manner very favourable to India. Indeed, Indira Gandhi rode a wave of popularity almost without parallel in Indian politics.

Yet there were conservative and communal interests which felt a sense of deep alarm at the changes which Indira Gandhi had already brought about; or planned to bring about in the future. Some of these interests were supported by the Congress leaders who had opposed Indira Gandhi in 1969; others drew upon communal ideology; others, yet again, indulged in the rhetoric of radical change without any understanding of what such change entailed. Altogether, these forces constituted a powerful coalition against Indira Gandhi and the Congress. However, although this alliance of reaction and irresponsibility had failed to muster any support in the national elections of 1971, or in the state elections of 1972, it nevertheless possessed the power to frustrate the progressive measures of Indira Gandhi. The reactionary circles got an opportunity for mischief when the states of Bihar and Gujarat erupted into crisis in the early 1970s. These circles were all too willing to throw their support behind leaders who sought to employ the weapon of 'satyagraha' in order to overthrow a legitimately elected government! The Bihar and Gujarat movements gained considerable strength in the next few years. On the surface, these agitations depended on moral persuasion; in reality, they rested upon techniques of intimidation which were as immoral as they were out of place in a democracy where legitimate power rests upon electoral support. The result of these movements, which were able to exploit the sentiments of sections of youth, was to paralyse the administration and create conditions of anarchy in Bihar and Gujarat.

At the same time as reaction and irresponsibility were launching an assault upon Indira Gandhi, an organized attempt was made to paralyse the railway system in India, which constitutes a crucial component of the economy. In 1974, some leaders of the opposition, who controlled the railway unions, called a strike which was a part of an overall plan of destabilization, although this objective was masked through presenting economic demands on behalf of the workers. Indira Gandhi read in the railway strike, as she also read in the agitations in Gujarat and Bihar, the clear intention of the leaders of the opposition, who had failed to secure popular support in the elections, to render the governance of the country an impossible business. She, therefore, took strong action against the railwaymen just as she also took strong action against those who attempted to disturb the peace of the realm in the northern and western states.

The attack on Indira Gandhi and on the Congress which was simultaneously an attack of the rich and the powerful upon the poor and the weak, also took the form of an attempt to unseat the Prime Minister from the Lok Sabha. At the same time, key members of the government and the judiciary were assassinated. Indira Gandhi reacted to all this by declaring a state of emergency, whereby the government could invigorate the administration and the economy. Her determination to set the wheels of progress in motion was expressed in a 20-point programme which, among other things, sought to reinforce the position of Harijans in society; distribute land to the landless; step up agricultural production; ensure a square deal to the industrial working class; and hold out encouragement to large and small scale industrial entrepreneurs. The 20-point programme was designed for the nation as a whole, but it reinforced in particular the position of the weaker sections of society.

The youth of India, under the leadership of Sanjay Gandhi, emerged at this juncture as a force of great potential and an instrument of social transformation. For the first time in its history, the Congress organized a wing devoted to the induction and education of youth; and this was put under the charge of Sanjay Gandhi. The Youth Congress built up a dedicated cadre, which served as a vibrant link between the party and the people; and it enabled Indira Gandhi to channelize popular enthusiasm into support of the policies of her government.

The years 1975-77 were fateful years in the history of India, when the Congress delivered a new message of striving and achievement to the popular classes. The period was marked by a far-reaching programme of land distribution to the tribals and Harijans; just as it was also marked by a new spurt of productive activity in the industrial and agrarian sectors. The results of all this were reflected in increases in the gross national product as well as in its equitable distribution between different classes and communities. The Congress became the party of the popular classes in a way it had never been so before. Indeed, its commitment to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy acquired a sharpness of focus which made itself felt in all arenas of national endeavour.

Yet the radical policies adopted by Indira Gandhi also earned her the hostility of vested interests in Indian society. The upsurge of hope for a better future among the common people alarmed those classes which controlled a share of the national product out of proportion to their demographic strength. Such vested interests retaliated through a campaign of vilification against Indira Gandhi and the Congress. Their ability to mount such a campaign was considerable because of the control which they exercised over the levers of social and economic power. Small wonder, then, that when Indira Gandhi issued a call for

general elections in 1977, an alliance of parties, which could come together only on a platform of hostility to progress, was able to inflict a defeat on the Congress at the polls. The reverses experienced by the Congress, in 1977 merely highlighted the formidable power of vested interests in the country; since, as subsequent events demonstrated, in reality the common people continued to support Indira Gandhi and her party.

A history of the Congress is no place for an evaluation of the Janata Party, which controlled power in New Delhi for a span of three years. Suffice it to mention here that the new ruling party, which elected as prime minister someone who had been rejected by the Congress earlier, failed to provide firm leadership to the country. As already indicated, the Janata Party was an alliance of political groups which were incapable of agreeing amongst themselves on the policies to be pursued with profit. As a result of the tensions which riddled this party, the economic strength of India as well as her ability to provide leadership to the Third World declined grievously.

The three years which Indira Gandhi spent in the wilderness were years of considerable distress for her and her political colleagues. The leaders of the Janata Party initiated a campaign of vilification against her and the machinery of the state was pressed into service in order to permanently undermine her position as a leader of the people. Yet in a democracy, it is impossible for a ruling party to hoodwink the people for long. The persecution of Indira Gandhi turned out to be wholly counter-productive and merely ensured for her the sympathy as well as the support of large sections of the people. On her part, Indira Gandhi battled fearlessly to clear herself of the charges levied against her by the Janata Party. Her opportunity for staging a comeback came when the leaders of the Janata Party turned a blind eye to the persecution of Harijans in the village of Belchi in Bihar. Indira Gandhi looked upon happenings at Belchi as reflective of what was happening to the deprived and the weak in the country as a whole under the new dispensation. She undertook a journey to Belchi in the summer of 1979 to demonstrate her deep concern for the poorest and the most helpless in the land. The pilgrimage to Belchi was a memorable journey, comparable in its symbolic and political significance to the mahatma's trek from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to the remote village of Dandi, in 1930, to initiate the Civil Disobedience Movement.

VII

Belchi marks a decisive turning point in the political development of India. From the very outset, the strength of the Congress lay in the support of the popular classes for the party and its leaders., Indira

Gandhi's visit to a remote hamlet reaffirmed her concern for the socially deprived; and they responded to this gesture by showering their affection on her. The renewed popularity of Indira Gandhi and the Congress was reflected in the elections to the Lok Sabha held late in 1979. The Congress, which underwent a new schism during the years it spent in the political wilderness, went to the polls with a promise to the people of providing a government that would uphold their rights and protect their interests. The people responded by voting for Indira Gandhi in massive numbers and her party secured 351 seats out of a total of 544 in the Lok Sabha. Once again, the link between the Congress and the masses was reaffirmed through the electoral process.

When Indira Gandhi assumed power in 1980, she faced a number of problems arising out of the apathy of the Janata Party towards the welfare of the country. The policies which the Congress had initiated in the 1970s had been completely disowned by the conservative leaders who ruled between 1977 and 1979. To take one instance, land distributed to the Harijans prior to 1977 was taken away from them and restored to its erstwhile owners, the affluent rural classes, which constituted an important factor behind the Congress defeat in 1977. Similarly, other measures designed for progress, too, were repudiated by the Janata Party, whether they concerned the economy or the scientific and cultural development of the country. Typical of the retrogressive stance of the Janata were the attempts to undermine the principles of secularism which the Congress had espoused from the very outset. These principles were substituted by a worldview designed to place serious obstacles in the way of integration of different religious communities into a cohesive national polity.

Indira Gandhi's first task, after assuming office in 1980, was to redress the damage inflicted upon the fabric of society during three years of Janata rule. The machinery of economic growth was reactivated, through introducing a modified version of the 20-point programme, with special emphasis on the needs of the poor and the weak in rural and in urban society. At the same time, steps were taken to reverse cultural policies which had sharpened divisions between different communities. The secular spirit, which had guided the Congress since its inception, was rearticulated in the altered circumstances of 1980. This rearticulation highlighted treatment of strict equality to all classes and communities; just as it also highlighted the nurturing of the varied social traditions which underpinned the composite culture of India.

Perhaps the leadership which Indira Gandhi extended to the Third World stands as the most eloquent testimony to her towering stature in the 1980s. Here she had inherited from her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, a distinguished legacy, resting on the belief that the newly liberated

countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America had political and economic interests which made them partners in a common endeavour, at the same time as it differentiated them from the superpowers. Whatever be the historical basis of non-alignment, Indira Gandhi discerned the substantive force behind it with unmistakable clarity during the course of events which led to the liberation of Bangladesh. Trends in international politics in the decade following the liberation of Bangladesh reinforced Indira Gandhi's conviction that the great issues of war and peace in the 20th century could only be resolved on the platform of the non-aligned movement. The growing economic anarchy in the world community constituted yet another problem which awaited resolution at the hands of the Third World. Throughout her tenure as Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi stressed the need for a more equitable economic relationship between the developing and the developed nations. All these issues were explored with great sensitivity in her speech before the Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in 1983. Never before had the Third World offered such perceptive leadership, on the question of peace in the nuclear age, and also that of equity in economic relation between nations, to mankind as a whole. Perhaps Indira Gandhi's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Conference was her finest hour as the leader of the most populous democracy in the world. She had matured, by this time, into a political figure of epic stature; and the deep compassion as well as the subtle comprehension with which she reflected upon the problems facing humanity characterized her as one of the truly distinguished figures in world politics in the second half of the 20th century. Speaking before the leaders of Asia, Africa and Latin America, she stated:

The Non-Aligned Movement has stood firmly for a thorough-going restructuring of international economic relations. We are against exploitation. We are for each nation's right to its resources and policies. We want an equal voice in the operation of international institution. We reiterate our commitment to the establishment of a New International Economic Order based on justice and equality. . . .

Our plans for a better life for each of our peoples depend on world peace and the reversal of the arms race. Only general and complete disarmament can provide credible security. Negotiations confined to a closed circle of nuclear-weapon powers have made little progress. We are non-nuclear States, who want nuclear energy used only for peace. But we too have a right to live and be heard. In the name of humanity and on behalf of us all, I call upon nuclear-weapon powers to give up the use or threat to use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances; suspend all nuclear weapons' tests and the production and deployment of nuclear weapons; and resume disarmament negotiations with determination to reach agreement."

If the tragic hand of fate had not intervened at this juncture, there is every reason to believe that Indira Gandhi would have contributed

substantially to the resolution of the military and economic problems facing mankind. However, developments within India were soon to cut short a career so rich in achievement and varied in experience. These developments touched upon the relationship between the Congress and the Sikh community; and the principle of secularism as the basis of Indian unity. From the very outset, the Congress was a party to which many diverse classes and communities had extended their support for the fulfilment of their aspirations. Among those who did so were the Sikhs; a vigorous community of agriculturists whose enterprise had even before 1947 transformed the Punjab into the granary of the subcontinent. The Sikhs also made an outstanding contribution to the struggle for freedom; and since 1920, they had stood shoulder to shoulder with other communities in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Not long after Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, some members of the Sikh community, organized in the Akali Dal, presented to her government a series of demands on behalf of the entire community. Some of these demands pertained to the economic domain; others were linguistic in character; others yet touched upon religious freedom and cultural autonomy. Indira Gandhi admired the Sikh community and respected its legitimate leaders. She, therefore, entered into a dialogue with such leaders to ascertain what could be done to meet the grievances of the community.

However, there were small groups among the Sikhs, who attempted to use the grievances, real or imaginary, of the community to undermine the integrity of the Indian state. The leaders of such groups adopted a blatantly communal posture; and although they enjoyed little support from the majority of the Sikh community, they utilized the tactics of intimidation and terror to precipitate a very serious situation in the Punjab. The most serious facet of the Punjab crisis lay in the transformation of some Sikh shrines into centres of activity prejudicial to the security of India.

Indira Gandhi exhibited exemplary patience in her dialogue with the Sikh leaders stretching over a span of two years. However, it gradually dawned upon her, as it dawned upon the people of India, that a small section of the Sikh leadership was determined to challenge the integrity of the country. On 3 June 1984, therefore, Indira Gandhi entrusted to the army the task of liberating the holy shrines of Sikhism from the clutches of terrorists and secessionists. This task was carried out with the application of minimum force in a very short span of time.

The terrorists and secessionists in the Sikh community, who had held the Punjab to ransom for two years, tried to portray the liberation of the shrines as an attack on the Sikh religion. However, Indira Gandhi's commitment to secularism, and regard for Sikhism and the Sikh

community, were too well known for these attempts to carry any credibility. Yet Sikh terrorists persisted in the tactics of terror; and on the 31 October 1985, Indira Gandhi was treacherously assassinated by two members of her security force who had been infected with the virus of communalism.

In the decade and a half during which Indira Gandhi led India with dedication and distinction, she had earned for herself a unique place in the hearts of her countrymen. During her tenure as prime minister, the economy was put firmly on the path to progress; and her conduct of foreign relations secured for India a place of distinction in the Third World, and a voice which commanded respect in the world community. Perhaps no other woman in history has shaped the destiny of a nation so decisively as Indira Gandhi shaped India's. Her assassination, therefore, was an act of brutality which affected the people most grievously; more particularly, it affected the poor and the deprived, who had looked upon her as their mentor and saviour.

Yet, in this moment of crisis, the Congress showed itself fully worthy of the confidence which the nation reposed in it. In a transition marked as much by promptness as it was by sagacity, the party elected Rajiv Gandhi as the new Prime Minister of India. This youthful member of the Congress had already revealed great promise as a leader. As prime minister, he turned to the nation, and gave voice to the belief that the removal of Indira Gandhi from the stage of politics conferred upon the people a sacred trust and a heavy responsibility: 'You and I have suffered a loss which can never be made good,' Rajiv Gandhi stated. 'You and I must work together to continue and complete the tasks which Indira Gandhi left unfinished. . . . With the scattering of her ashes in the Himalayas will end Indira Gandhi's earthly journey. But the nation's journey continues. Let us walk together, stout of heart and purpose, firm in step.'¹²

Although Rajiv Gandhi had been elected leader of the Congress without a single voice of dissent, it was nevertheless necessary for him to secure a mandate from the electorate. In December 1984, therefore, the Congress once again went to the polls to test its popularity with the people. The results of this election demonstrated the extent to which the people looked upon the Congress as the embodiment of national unity; and the party most likely to successfully accomplish the transformation of India into a modern industrial society. Out of 535 seats in the Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 400. Never before in its long history had the Congress ever scored so well at the polls. However, the greatest election victory ever won by the Congress was in reality a personal triumph for Rajiv Gandhi, whose vision of the future of India, and whose charisma, had captured the imagination of the people.

With the support of the people and the Congress, Rajiv Gandhi turned to the tasks which confronted him with rare determination and courage. Foremost on his agenda was the resolution of the Punjab problem, which had inflicted such grievous wounds on the body politic. However, equally significant was the call which the Prime Minister gave to the nation, to prepare itself for a technological revolution that would place it in the ranks of the foremost industrial nations of the world; and initiate a new era of prosperity in the country. As Rajiv Gandhi observed on the morrow of the election:

You have given my party and me your confidence in overflowing measure. Who could ask for more? And how can we prove worthy of it? Only by working for you with unremitting faith and humility, summoning all our reserves of strength and energy, being as unsparing with ourselves as you have been generous with your trust. . . .

In a few months we shall begin the Seventh Plan. The war against our old enemies — poverty, unemployment, disease, ignorance — continues. In the weeks ahead, we shall review our existing policies and programmes to ensure that our basic objectives of growth with justice are realised within the stipulated time-table.¹³

The people of India responded to the call given by Rajiv Gandhi with an enthusiasm rarely witnessed in the arena of national politics. The new Prime Minister cleared the decks by fashioning an accord with the leaders of the Punjab, which was sealed by the installation of a popularly elected government at Chandigarh. The path was thus opened for focussing attention upon the tasks of social and economic reconstruction through which alone can the people enjoy their rich cultural heritage.

What does the future hold for India? Obviously there is no simple answer to this question. The reconstruction of a nation inevitably involves ceaseless labour and toil over decades, before the results of such activity become manifest. But there is reason to believe that, under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, and that of the Congress, the people will prove themselves capable of transforming India into a creative society, dedicated to the ideal of generating peace and prosperity for itself, as well as for mankind as a whole. Perhaps the saga of struggle and achievement, spelt out in this *Centenary History*, will provide to the leaders and to the people, the poise and self-comprehension necessary for such an epic endeavour.

Footnotes

1. Jawaharlal Nehru: *The Discovery of India*, p. 357.
2. Ibid., pp. 358-9.
3. *Whither India* by Jawaharlal Nehru, published as a series of articles on 9, 10 and 11 October 1933 in the Indian press: See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. VI, pp. 1-16.
4. Nirmal Kumar Bose: *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 171.
5. M.K. Gandhi: *Young India*, 2 January 1930.
6. M.K. Gandhi: *Young India*, 9 January 1930.
7. *Indian Annual Register*, I, pp. 112-9.
8. N.K. Bose: *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 178.
9. 'A tryst with Destiny', speech delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 14 August 1947.
10. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Basic Approach' *AICC Economic Review*, 15 August 1958.
11. Speech by Shrimati Indira Gandhi at the Inaugural Session of the 7th Non-Aligned Conference, *Seventh Non-Aligned Summit documents*.
12. Message to the People by Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 7 November 1984.
13. Speech by Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 5 January 1985, See *The Times of India*, 6 January 1985.

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The moral and material support which the project has received from the late Shrimati Indira Gandhi, and from the Prime Minister and President of the Congress, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, is acknowledged in the *Preface*. Over and above this, since the time when the *Centenary History* was conceived a decade ago, in November 1975, numerous colleagues and friends have extended invaluable assistance to me, among whom I would particularly like to mention Shri Devkant Barooah, Shri N.K. Sharma, and Sarvashri K.D. Malaviya and Triloki Singh, both of whom are no longer in our midst. However, most of all I would like to thank my friend and adviser, Shri H.Y. Sharada Prasad, without whose support it would have been impossible for me to fulfil these heavy responsibilities.

From April 1976 to March 1977, I took an extensive tour all over the country visiting National and State Archives, the National Library and the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, the Archives of All India Khilafat Committee Office at Bombay, the *Kesari* Office at Pune, the Headquarters Library of the Theosophical Society and the *Hindu* Office at Madras. I also paid a visit to Hyderabad and examined the records at the State Archives and the records of the Government of Nizam of Hyderabad. During my tour abroad, I spent nearly a week at the British Museum and India Office Library at London and Bibliopheque Nationale at Paris. Everywhere I received courteous treatment and promises of help. I express my gratefulness to all these authorities.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover nearly 20,000 pages of valuable material at the Bombay Archives on the events of Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements which nobody had till then glanced at. I also lo-

cated numerous citizens who had preserved in private collections valuable materials concerning the period from 1901 to 1919. The original records of the meetings of the Working Committee of the All India Khilafat Committee had been carefully preserved. They gave a fascinating account of the discussions on the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements. The signatures showed the presence of many stalwarts of Khilafat, and Congress leaders such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, M.A. Ansari, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal, Mufti Kifayatulla, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and several others. I wish all this material is microfilmed and preserved for posterity in an appropriate repository.

After the Congress (I) returned to power in 1980, Shrimati Indira Gandhi constituted a Committee in 1982 with herself as Chairman and myself as Executive Director. Shri Rajiv Gandhi, when he became the General Secretary of the AICC(I), generously placed funds at my disposal and continued to remind me that the work had to be expedited.

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released at the historic centenary session of the Congress at Bombay, in December 1985, by our beloved Prime Minister and Congress President, Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

B.N. PANDE
General Editor

A CENTENARY HISTORY OF
THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

VOLUME TWO

1919-1935

Edited by

Ravinder Kumar
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New Delhi

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Introduction

Ravinder Kumar

AS PEACE DAWNED upon a world weary of war in November 1918, the people of India, who had contributed so substantially to the defeat of Kaiser William's Germany, braced themselves for a new effort to liberate their country from the stranglehold of British imperialism. Even during the course of war, the leaders of the Indian National Congress, who represented the mainstream of nationalism, had drafted a constitution which had been endorsed by the principal classes and communities in the country; and which sought for India a status of autonomy within the British Empire. However, while the British Government was willing to consider a limited measure of political autonomy for India after the conclusion of war, far short of the constitution drawn up by the Congress in 1916, its real intentions were reflected in the enactment of a repressive law, the so-called Rowlatt Act, which sought to deny to the people those basic liberties of speech and person which constitute the bedrock of civilized government in any country.

Yet the desire for political freedom among the people of India was too powerful, at this juncture, to be thwarted by the resources of coercion available to the British Government. As the war drew to a close, the demand for constitutional autonomy, voiced by the Congress in 1916, was reinforced by a number of political movements reflecting the widespread realization among industrialists, financiers and men of business; among the professional as well as the lower middle classes; and among peasants, industrial workers and tribal communities, that the regime of exploitation set up by the British Government had to be dismantled before their moral and material creativity came into its own. The Home Rule Leagues created by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak reflected this sentiment among the middle and lower middle classes; though membership of the Leagues was by no means confined to men of property and education. The Muslims of India, rich and poor, landlords, merchants, artisans and peasants, were greatly distressed over the

Perhaps a few observations about the ideological basis and the moral texture of satyagraha as a humanistic vision and as a guide to political action would be appropriate at this juncture. Gandhi subscribed to the view that the religious impulse in man was the noblest impulse in his being. He further equated this impulse with the eternal quest for truth, on the one hand, and the adoption of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, as the basis of individual and collective social relations, on the other. The location of a religious impulse in men, whatever be their vocation, meant that satyagraha could be effectively utilized in all social situations. Turning to the sphere of politics in the extended sense of the term, Gandhi believed that the 'weapon' of satyagraha could persuade exploiters and evil-doers to undergo a change of heart, and redress the wrongs, moral and material, which they were inflicting upon others. Since satyagraha rested upon non-violence, and since it aimed at conjuring into existence the 'good society' through a change of heart rather than through the application of brute force, Gandhi was of the view that his technique of political action was not only radically different from that of others, but that it also created a bond of sympathy and understanding between the exploiters and the exploited, the rulers and the ruled, at the same time as it resolved social and political problems. Finally, as he put it in *Hind Swaraj*, the most integrated expression of his social vision, satyagraha as a mode of social and political action was particularly relevant to the problems which confronted India in the opening decades of the 20th century. The path to self-determination in India, so Gandhi believed, lay in a bold assertion of autonomy in the face of British imperialism. The alien rulers of the land would have to be bluntly told:

You have great military resources. Your naval power is matchless. If we wanted to fight with you on your own ground, we should be unable to do so, but if the above submissions be not acceptable to you, we cease to play the part of the ruled. You may, if you like, cut us to pieces. You may shatter us at the cannon's mouth. If you act contrary to our will, we shall not help you, and without our help, we know that you cannot move one step forward.

It is likely that you will laugh at all this in the intoxication of your power. We may not be able to disillusion you at once; but if there be any manliness in us, you will see shortly that your laugh at our expense is an aberration of intellect. We believe that at heart you belong to a religious nation. We are living in a land which is the source of religions. How we came together need not be considered, but we can make mutual good use of our relations. . . . So doing we shall benefit each other and the world. But that will happen only when the root of our relationship is sunk in a religious soil.³

Gandhi's assertion that India's salvation lay in the adoption of satya-

graha as the basis of political action was put to a critical test soon after his return to India. On the advice of the distinguished nationalist, G.K. Gokhale, whom he regarded as his mentor, Gandhi spent a full year travelling in different parts of the country after his return from South Africa, engaging himself in a dialogue with the urban classes (particularly the intelligentsia) which were, so he discovered, greatly attracted by the goal of national self-determination without having any idea of how they could move towards it. The path suggested by Gandhi; the path of consummating a marriage between religion and politics; of adopting non-violence as the basis of political action, seemed to offer interesting possibilities. It combined militancy of action with a measure of self-constraint singularly appropriate to the resources of power available to the people of India in their struggle against British imperialism. Yet Gandhi, at this juncture, had not achieved a breakthrough in reaching out to social classes which had hitherto remained aloof from national politics. Nor had he come around to the view that confrontation with the British Government was the only means by which the people of India could achieve their political objectives.

All this was to change dramatically during the next few years. As already suggested, the peasantry, the working classes and the tribal communities of India were becoming increasingly conscious of the social and economic exploitation to which they were being subjected, and the relationship between their wretched condition and the regime of imperial rule which obtained in the land. Indeed, throughout the second half of the 19th century, even after the uprising of 1857 had been suppressed with a ferocity unrivalled in the annals of Indian history, the rural classes — peasants as well as tribal communities — had risen again and again against their exploiters, the British rulers of the land as well as their native collaborators, in a bid to create for themselves a life of social dignity and material well-being. Similar struggles for an equitable share of the wealth which was produced in the factories characterized the activities of the working classes in the emerging centres of modern industry like Bombay, Calcutta and Ahmedabad, over a corresponding period. However, the popular struggle of peasants, workers and tribals constituted a domain of activity quite distinct hitherto from the political activity of the Congress, which had reached out primarily to the middle classes, commercial and professional, as well as to the lower middle classes, in the cities and towns of India.

It would be true to say that Gandhi, initially, was no more conscious of the political ferment at work among the popular masses in the cities and villages than the existing leadership of the Congress. The initiative in bridging this gulf and transforming the social character of the struggle for freedom came from the peasantry of a remote district in Bihar, which

reached out to Gandhi, in 1916, to seek his assistance in lightening their burden of misery. Champaran, the district in question, had for long been dominated by European planters of indigo, who forced the peasants of the region to cultivate the land on terms which were oppressive in the extreme. When Gandhi saw for himself the exploitative system set up by the planters, he organized a non-violent movement of great militancy against them. The British Government of Bihar, in the first instance, tried to suppress the satyagraha. But when it failed to do so, largely because of the skill with which Gandhi organized the peasantry, a commission of enquiry was appointed whose findings largely vindicated Gandhi's position concerning the grievances of the peasants of Champaran.

The unrest in Champaran was also reflected in the temper of the industrial and the rural classes in western India. At the very doorsteps of his ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati, Gandhi ran full tilt into the restlessness of the textile workers of Ahmedabad, who were convinced that the factory owners of the city were denying them a fair share of the profits of industry in the form of an equitable wage. Here again, Gandhi was able to persuade the textile workers to mount a struggle resting on the principles of satyagraha, and (as in Champaran) this struggle resulted in a settlement, which seemed to suggest that the path of *ahimsa* offered an effective means of resolving social and political conflict in India. Finally, the peasant proprietors of Kheda in Gujarat, the so-called Patidars, were greatly distressed at an increase in their tax obligations arising out of a new revenue assessment of the district by the Government of Bombay. The leaders of the Patidars, too, turned to Gandhi for guidance in their predicament. Once again Gandhi was able to present satyagraha as the weapon best suited to waging a militant struggle against the British Government. He was as successful in Kheda as he had been earlier in Champaran and in Ahmedabad.

Although the non-violent agitations conducted under Gandhi's leadership at this juncture were localized in scale, they carried a significance far beyond the localities and the social classes which they affected directly. As suggested earlier, the leadership of the Congress had, hitherto, been concerned primarily with the educated urban classes, professional and commercial. The aspirations or the grievances of the peasantry, the industrial workers and the tribal communities, had made no impact at all upon the organized national movement. Gandhi was the first outstanding leader to recognize the powerful sentiment of nationalism among the popular classes, who saw their poverty and deprivation as something for which the British Government, as well as its collaborators within Indian society, were directly responsible. If these classes were drawn into the arena of nationalist politics, the British

Government in India would face a popular movement of invincible strength.

The ideological lessons which Gandhi drew from the local movements which he organized in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda were equally significant. While the time-honoured methods of agitation adopted by the leaders of the Congress before the First World War — representations, petitions and even constitutional agitation — had borne little fruit over the years, there was no reason to believe that a strategy of revolutionary violence would be any more effective. The fact of the matter was that the British Government possessed resources of brute power which were infinitely superior to the resources which the nationalists could possibly muster. The truth of this assertion had been demonstrated by the manner in which the British authorities were able to suppress the outbreaks of revolutionary violence in Bengal, Maharashtra and the Punjab during the first decade of the 20th century. The break-up of the political formations created by the revolutionary nationalists, who believed that through heroic acts of violence they could trigger off a popular uprising against the British Raj, seemed to suggest that a strategy of liberation resting upon political violence had little chance of success in the context of India. The path of satyagraha offered a way out of the dilemma. It combined political militancy with a technique of mass agitation which made it difficult for the British Government to invoke physical force against the satyagrahis. Perhaps Jawaharlal Nehru spoke for an entire generation of young nationalists when he expressed his conviction that satyagraha was the most appropriate method of political action open to the people of India: 'Here at last was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective. I was afire with enthusiasm. . . .'⁴

2. The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919

The possibility of mounting a nationwide agitation based on non-violence came sooner than Gandhi or his rapidly growing number of followers had anticipated. Even while the war was in progress in Europe, and in West Asia, the British Government had fashioned a dual strategy to meet the challenge of nationalism in India. The liberal face of imperialism was reflected in the Declaration of 1917, which stated that 'the policy of His Majesty's Government . . . is that of . . . gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'⁵ To substantiate this declaration, a parliamentary committee was set up with the purpose of drafting a new constitution which would give a measure of autonomy to India; and E.S. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, proceeded to the subcontinent to hold

discussions with leaders of different persuasions, and through such discussions, to shape a new system of governance for the country.

While proposals for constitutional reform were being hammered out by Montagu, conservative civilians within the Government of India were engaged in preparing the ground for the enactment of legislation which would greatly enhance the arbitrary authority vested in the hands of the imperial administration. The initiative for such legislation was taken by Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, who was one of the most reactionary members of the Indian Civil Service. Craddock believed that the values as well as the institutions of liberal democracy were totally irrelevant to India, and he argued that the Government of India should, in no circumstances, loosen its grip over the levers of political power. Referring to the constitutional measures which Montagu and other liberals of his persuasion sought to implement, Craddock observed:

In India today how can we apply the test of self-determination? How are we to pronounce in which direction it is? . . . There is not a single section in India who believes in or is anxious for democracy. The nearest approach to it is the mob rule, liked by the howling proletariat of the towns which the communist in his malice, and the seditious in his blindness, are combining to produce in all the large cities. The only people who consistently throughout India acclaim a pure democratic constitution are the Brahmins for they think that even if the Brahmin's hereditary astuteness should not by itself suffice to secure him a monopoly of power the Brahmin's religious curse will supply the deficiency.⁶

Conservatives like Craddock could not stem the tide of constitutional progress in India despite the wide support which they commanded in the ranks of the British community. However, they impressed upon the Government of India the necessity of setting up a commission to assess the strength of revolutionary groups committed to a policy of violence; and to draft legislation which would enable it to deal effectively with what was described as 'political crime'. The Rowlatt Committee, which came into existence as a result of such pressures, explored the genesis and the strength of the revolutionary movement in India and recommended the adoption of legislation which would enable the Government of India to set aside the due processes of law in dealing with acts of political violence.

The passage of the Rowlatt Bills in the Imperial Legislative Council was opposed by nationalists of all hues. Members with radically different views — loyalists, moderates or extremists — were shocked at the insensitivity of a government which sought to arm itself with such extraordinary powers of coercion at the same time as it was seeking to

win over nationalist opinion through constitutional reforms. Gandhi, in particular, was dismayed at the immorality of the whole proceeding; and the episode undermined his faith in the good intentions and in the moral integrity of the British rulers of the land. As he explained to V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, the Liberal leader:

To me the Bills are the regulated symptoms of the deep-seated disease. They are a striking demonstration of the determination of the Civil Service to retain its grip of our necks. There is not the slightest desire to give up an iota of its unlimited powers, and if the civil service is to retain its unlimited rule over us, the British commerce is to enjoy its privileged position, I feel that the reforms will not be worth having. I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us. If we succumb we are done for. If we may prove our word that the government will see an agitation such that they have never witnessed before, we shall have proved our capacity for resistance to arbitrary or tyrannical rule. . . . For myself if the Bills were to be proceeded with, I feel that I can no longer render peaceful obedience to the laws of a power that is capable of such a devilish legislation as these two Bills, and I would not hesitate to incite those who think with me to join me in the struggle.⁷

Since the Government of India refused to listen to the words of warning uttered by nationalist leaders within and without the Imperial Legislative Council, Gandhi took a solemn decision to organize a satyagraha, throughout the length and breadth of India, for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act. He further signed a pledge, along with a handful of his close associates, voicing his determination to 'refuse civilly to oppose the laws [the Rowlatt Bills] and such other laws, as a Committee hitherto appointed may think fit and we further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.'⁸ At the same time, Gandhi wrote an open letter to the people of India, seeking their moral support and urging them to participate in the satyagraha which he was initiating against the British Government.⁹

Gandhi had even prior to 1919 led with conspicuous success non-violent agitations in South Africa and in India. Yet the scale of the Rowlatt Satyagraha was qualitatively different from the scale of the earlier agitations. In the spring of 1919, Gandhi appealed to an entire nation of 400 million to launch an assault upon the British Government of India through a novel technique of political warfare. Furthermore, although Gandhi had set up Satyagraha Sabhas in a few cities to guide the agitation against the Rowlatt Act, he could not at this juncture claim the support of any national organization like the Indian National Congress. All he had to back his call for a countrywide satyagraha was his reputation for piety, truthfulness and courage among the common people; as well as the widespread hostility of his countrymen to the Rowlatt Act, which symbolized their subject state.

Nevertheless, Gandhi was agreeably surprised at the enthusiasm with which the people of India responded to his call for a satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. All over the country, Hindus and Muslims, the rich and the poor, businessmen and professionals, industrialists and workers, and artisans and lumpen elements, rose in a mighty movement of protest against the British Government. Broadly speaking, the agitation was stronger in the cities and in the larger towns than in the rural areas; though it reached out to the smaller towns, market centres and even villages in Gujarat and in the Punjab; and to a lesser extent, in the United Provinces and in western Maharashtra. But in the cities and larger towns, too, the satyagraha was supported by different classes and communities to varying extents. In Bombay, the satyagraha was observed in the main by the middle and lower middle classes drawn from the Gujarati and the Muslim communities. In Ahmedabad, Gandhi's adopted hometown, and the site of the Sabarmati Ashram, the mercantile and the professional classes, as well as the workers, Hindus and Muslims, rallied to his support in great numbers. Calcutta was relatively quiet despite its great reputation for being one of the liveliest centres of nationalist politics in India. However, the cities of the south, particularly Madras, witnessed numerous demonstrations of support for the satyagraha. But it was the cities of northern India, Delhi, Lahore and Amritsar, and the numerous district towns of the region, which witnessed the most crowded, the most vociferous and the most enthusiastic demonstrations for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act.

The agitation launched by Gandhi in April 1919 was unprecedented in nationalist history in two respects. First, it was truly subcontinental in character; and secondly, it attracted classes and communities in the cities and towns which had hitherto refrained from participating in nationalist agitations. Moreover, all available evidence suggests that the people who participated in the satyagraha — Hindus or Muslims, the rich or the poor, the middle classes or the lower orders — demonstrated their hostility to the British Government in a manner remarkable for its orderliness and discipline. That the agitation took a violent turn, partly in the cities of western India, but more particularly in the cities of the north, Delhi, Lahore and Amritsar, besides a number of small district towns and rural market centres, was largely due to the attempt of the local British administrators to suppress popular demonstrations, initially through the use of police, but subsequently through calling in the army. The most horrifying incident in the course of the Rowlatt Satyagraha took place in Amritsar where, on 13 April 1919, the army fired upon a peaceful crowd of 20,000 citizens, which had assembled in response to the call of local Congress leaders, killing 397 and wounding 1,143 of them. In the face of such ferocious repression, the agitation against the

Rowlatt Act soon ground to a halt. Yet the tumultuous events of April 1919 demonstrated beyond the shadow of doubt that a consciousness of national unity and a sense of national purpose had crystallized among the people of India. They also demonstrated the effectiveness with which Gandhi could reach out to different classes and communities in the country. Moreover, the extent to which people all over India participated in the Rowlatt Satyagraha clearly symbolized the transfer of 'moral authority' over the country from the hands of the British Government into the hands of the nationalist leadership. Indeed, this 'moral authority' was now vested in the person of Gandhi, who was very soon to assume formal leadership over the Indian National Congress.

3. The Non-Cooperation Movement

While the social and economic discontents which affected different classes and communities in India during the opening decades of the 20th century provided the backdrop to nationalist ferment against the British Raj, it would be a gross mistake to assume that such discontents, in themselves, provide a full explanation of demonstrations of popular will like the Rowlatt Satyagraha. Nationalism is as much a moral as it is a materialist phenomenon; and national movements are as much concerned with political and cultural objectives as they are with social and economic objectives. To this axiom the growth of nationalism in India was no exception. The people of India, the elites as well as the popular classes, were increasingly drawn to the belief that their liberation from British rule would enable them to initiate a moral revolution at the same time as it enabled them to create for themselves a new era of material prosperity.

Nothing illustrates the ideological as opposed to the material underpinning of nationalism in India better than the sentiment of Khilafat in the Muslim community; and the manner in which a spiritual crisis drew the followers of Islam, merchants and artisans, the landed gentry and the peasantry, and even the lumpen classes, into agitations against the British Raj. Already by the end of the 19th century, the *ulema* or the clerical classes, and a few other sections of the Muslim community, particularly the minor gentry and the artisans, were attracted by the heady vision of Pan-Islamism. Under the influence of this ideology, such Muslims began looking beyond the frontiers of India, to the Ottoman Empire (whose Sultan claimed to be the Khalifa, or the spiritual head, of Muslims throughout the world) for redefining their religious identity as well as for reassurance at a time when Muslim fortunes in India seemed to be at a low ebb. The hostility to imperialism of such Muslims was reinforced by a growing middle class in the community, which was drawn to the idea of political autonomy for India, for reasons

similar to those which stimulated nationalism in the Hindu middle classes.

The leadership of the Muslim community in India, at this juncture, lay in the hands of clerical figures like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Abdul Bari; and secular figures like Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali. The outbreak of war in 1914 reinforced Pan-Islamic sentiment in India, since Britain and Turkey found themselves in the position of belligerents. However, it was the defeat of Turkey (along with Germany) in 1918 that conjured into existence a qualitative change in the temper of Muslim politics in India. There was now a growing fear among the Muslims that the Ottoman Empire would be dismembered, as part of the post-war settlement, with grave consequences for the status of Islam in the world community. Faced with this threat to their moral identity, the clerical classes organized themselves into a *Majlis-a-Ulema-a-Hind*, and the secular leaders set up a Central Khilafat Committee. Both organizations had branches throughout the country. The establishment of an alliance between the secular leaders and the *ulema*, who had close links with the community as a whole, was a momentous happening. From the pulpits of hundreds of mosques in cities and towns, the *ulema* spoke to the Muslim community of the grave danger to their religion. Small wonder, then, that Muslims of all classes became very hostile to the British Government, which sentiment was reflected, among other things, in the support which they extended to the satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act in April 1919.

Gandhi was acutely conscious of the sentiments abroad in the Muslim community. He was also aware of the opportunity which these sentiments afforded for a great Hindu-Muslim entente against the British Raj. True, the two communities had already established a united front at the annual session of the Congress in 1916. But this alliance had barely affected classes other than the educated and the professional classes. The Khilafat issue, however, had made a very profound impression upon the poor Muslim classes, like the artisans, the industrial workers and the peasantry. Gandhi was very sensitive to the religious sensibilities of the people, and his vision of the good society, in which the religious impulse represented all that was true and noble in man, encouraged him to look favourably upon the induction of religious grievances for political purposes. As he pointed out before a gathering of Khilafatists in Bombay:

There are two things to which I am devoting my life — permanent unity between Hindus and Muslims, and satyagraha. . . . The question that I have to answer this evening is: How can I help in having a Mahomedan question emerging out of the late war properly solved? After my arrival in India, I began to find out good Mahomedan leaders. My desire was satis-

fied when I reached Delhi, and found the Brothers Ali, whom I had the privilege of knowing before. It was a question of love at first sight. When I met Dr Ansari, the circle of Mahomedan friends widened and at last it even included Maulana Abdul Bari of Lucknow. I have discussed the Mahomedan question with all these friends . . . and I feel that this question is the greatest of all . . . for it affects the religious susceptibilities of millions of Mahomedans. . . .

It may be asked why I, a Hindu, bother my head about the Mahomedan question. The answer is that as you are my neighbours and my countrymen, it is my duty to share your sorrow. I cannot talk about Hindu-Muslim Unity and fail to give effect to the idea when the test has arrived.¹⁰

Notwithstanding the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and Muslim anger over Khilafat, when the Congress met in annual session in Amritsar late in 1919, Gandhi was unwilling to mount a frontal assault on the British Raj in India. Perhaps Gandhi's moderation was shaped by a number of considerations. In the first instance, the British had announced a new package of constitutional reforms in 1919, which reforms, while they fell short of nationalist expectations, nevertheless substantially increased the powers of popularly elected Indian representatives in the legislative councils. Next, while the statements expressing British intentions about the fate of Turkey in the post-war settlement were the reverse of reassuring, a peace treaty had still to be formulated with those in control of affairs at Constantinople. Last but not the least, the British Government had appointed a commission of enquiry into the happenings in the Punjab, and elsewhere, in the course of the Rowlatt Satyagraha; and the report of this committee was anxiously awaited by all sections of opinion in India. For all these reasons, Gandhi was reluctant to declare war on the British Government before it had spelt out its attitude on the great issues of Khilafat and self-determination which were agitating the minds of the people.

The crucial question before the leadership of the Congress at the annual session of 1919 was the attitude to be adopted to the constitutional reforms which had been announced shortly before the session commenced. Along with the reforms came a conciliatory Royal Proclamation which stated: 'It is my earnest desire at this time that so far as possible all traces of bitterness between my people and those who are responsible for my government should be obliterated. . . . A new era is opening. Let us begin with a common determination among my people and my officers to work together for a common purpose.'¹¹ C.R. Das, the great Bengali leader, moved a resolution which defined the Reforms Act as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing'. It was also stated therein that 'This Congress further urges that Parliament should take early steps to establish full responsible government in India in accordance

with the principles of self-determination.¹² While broadly supporting the resolution of C.R. Das, Gandhi moved an amendment in which he suggested the deletion of the word 'disappointing' in describing the Reforms Act, and the addition of a clause welcoming the substance as well as the spirit of the Royal Proclamation. As he in effect observed while moving his amendment: The traditions of India made it obligatory that the integrity of one's opponent be honoured in the first instance. Yet if the British Government overlooked the popular desire for freedom, then it would have to be opposed through the weapon of satyagraha.¹³

Despite the moderation of the Congress leaders at Amritsar in December 1919, the events of the next few months made it clear that the British Government was set upon a collision course with nationalist sentiment in India. The Muslim community was particularly incensed over the Khilafat issue; and Gandhi, who was in close touch with the Muslim leaders, put before them the idea of an agitation resting on the principles of non-violence to redress the wrongs suffered by their followers. The programme of non-cooperation, as put forward by Gandhi, in the first instance to the Muslim leadership, was brilliant in its simplicity of design and pregnant with the most momentous possibilities. It was based upon the assumption that the British Government in India could function only because the people associated themselves with it in a number of ways. If the people refused to co-operate with the British Government; if they rejected the institutions of education, law and administration set up under British aegis; and if they further refused to pay their taxes; then the British Raj would collapse like a house of cards, and the people of India would earn for themselves swaraj. Needless to say, such a programme of action would have to be mounted on a strictly non-violent basis. Otherwise, so Gandhi believed, not only would the people of India reveal a fatal weakness in their moral fibre, but the British Government would exploit its resources of brute strength to suppress the struggle.

Two events of the spring of 1920 were destined to draw the major religious communities, Hindu and Muslim, fully behind the programme of action drawn up by Gandhi. On 15 May 1920, the British Government published the text of the peace treaty with Turkey, along with a lengthy message from the viceroy to the 'Muslim People of India' asking them to accept 'terms which I fear will be painful to all Muslims'.¹⁴ Less than a fortnight later, the Hunter Committee, which had been appointed to look into the unfortunate incidents associated with the Rowlatt Satyagraha, placed its findings before the public. The report, not surprisingly, was a clumsy attempt at justifying the humiliation and worse which the Punjab Government had imposed upon the Punjabis as a whole and

upon the citizens of Amritsar in particular. Indeed, so partial were the findings of the Hunter Committee, that its Indian members, who were in a minority, refused to endorse the views of the European members, and came out with a Minority Report which was a scathing indictment of British civil and military authorities.

The publication of the peace treaty with Turkey, and the findings of the Hunter Commission, represented, so Gandhi believed, the utter moral bankruptcy of the British Government in India. He now felt justified in appealing to the people to adopt the path of satyagraha to rid themselves of a government which was 'satanic' in its total disregard of the conventions of civilized governance. A meeting of the AICC at Banaras, on 30 May, decided to call a special session of the Congress, at Calcutta, in September 1920, to debate the proposal for the adoption of non-cooperation. The Muslim leadership of India, which reflected the anger of their constituents at the manner in which they had been betrayed by the British Government, decided to adopt the Gandhian programme, in its entirety, without waiting for the special session of the Congress. At a meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee at Allahabad, on 2 June, at which Gandhi and some other prominent Hindu leaders were present in the capacity of special invitees, a formal decision was taken, whereby the task of organizing a non-violent assault on the British Government was entrusted to a small committee consisting of Gandhi, Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali.

Despite the support which Gandhi enjoyed from the Muslim community, the Congress session at Calcutta, where the proposal to adopt non-cooperation was to be debated, proved to be a very turbulent affair. Lajpat Rai, a veteran leader of the Punjab and the president of the Calcutta session was opposed to the Gandhian programme, though he refrained from voicing his views in his presidential address. However, when Gandhi formally moved a resolution committing the Congress to non-cooperation, a number of leaders from Bengal, Maharashtra, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, and the south, prominent among them being B.C. Pal, C.R. Das, M.M. Malaviya, Joseph Baptista, M.A. Jinnah and Satyamurti, opposed it. Indeed, Motilal Nehru was alone among the established leaders of the Congress in supporting Gandhi at this juncture. Nevertheless, in contrast to the stance of the leadership, the rank and file delegates who had assembled at Calcutta were largely behind the Mahatma in his call for a non-violent assault on the British Raj; and his resolution advocating the adoption of non-cooperation was upheld by a large majority (1,826 votes against 984).¹⁵

The popular support for Gandhi, for the attainment of swaraj, and for satyagraha as the weapon most likely to attain this objective, is eloquently reflected in the proceedings of the annual session of the

Congress held at Nagpur in December 1920. When the Congress leaders returned to their respective provinces, after the deliberations of September 1920 at Calcutta, they discovered the full extent to which Gandhi's moral authority reached out, over their heads, to different classes and communities in India; and this persuaded them to support a satyagraha movement against the British Government. Even the educated classes of Bengal, which were as passionately nationalistic as they were proud of their commitment to the institutions of representative politics, responded to the Mahatma's charisma in a manner which obliged their leader, C.R. Das, to reconsider his attitude towards non-cooperation, which included, among other things, a ban on contesting elections to legislative councils. In Maharashtra, in the Punjab, in the Central Provinces, in the Provinces of the south, indeed, throughout the length and breadth of India, nationalist leaders of different persuasions discerned that the message of swaraj had made a great impression upon the popular psyche; and had transformed Gandhi into a truly national figure, eclipsing everyone else on the political stage. The annual session of the Congress at Nagpur, therefore, witnessed an overwhelming demonstration of support for the Mahatma. The resolution committing the Congress to non-cooperation was moved by C.R. Das, who appealed to 'every lawyer, every student, every trader, every agriculturist, every merchant, and everybody in the country'¹⁶ to respond to the call for swaraj. The resolution was adopted without a dissenting voice. Gandhi's triumph was complete. He had behind him a great political organization and the support of the overwhelming majority of the people of India in the epic struggle to be waged on non-violent lines against the greatest imperial power known to human history.

The manner in which the people of India, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, rich and poor, zamindars and kisans, capitalists and workers, the educated and the unlettered, fought British imperialism under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, is recapitulated in detail in the chapters which follow. Suffice it to mention here that the challenge which the non-cooperation movement posed to the British Raj was more serious than any challenge which it had encountered since 1857. Unlike the uprising of 1857, however, non-cooperation rested upon a modern notion of nationalism; and the movement was characterized by a spatial distribution and a social depth absent in the events which convulsed India in the middle of the 19th century. For these reasons, and also because of the extent to which Gandhi's moral influence and the prospect of swaraj reached out to the common people of India, the non-cooperation movement posed to the British Government the most intractable problems of political control and management. Perhaps what the agitation meant to 'faces in the

crowd' is reflected with great sensitivity in the following quotations, which describe what the millworkers in Bombay, the peasants of Avadh, and the tribal folk of Gujarat, respectively, *felt* and *believed* during these stormy years.

Item: While our struggle . . . was going on in this manner [stated A.A. Alwe, a worker in the Bombay Textile industry] the drum of political agitation was being beaten in the country. The Congress started a great agitation demanding rights for India to conduct her own administration. At that time we workers understood the meaning of this demand for swaraj to be only this; that our indebtedness would disappear, the oppression of the moneylender would stop, our wages would increase, and the oppression of the owner on the worker, the kicks and blows with which they belabour us, would stop by legislation, and that as a result of it, the persecution of us workers would come to an end. These and other thoughts came into the minds of us workers, and a good many workers from among us, and I myself, enlisted ourselves as volunteers in the non-cooperation movement.¹⁷

Item: The currency which Mr. Gandhi's name has acquired in the remotest villages is astonishing. No one seems to know quite who or what he is, but it is an accepted fact that what he says is so, and what he orders must be done. He is a *Mahatma* or *Sadhu*, a *pandit*, a *Brahman* [learned one] who lives at Allahabad, even a *Deota* [angel]. One man said he was a merchant who sells cloth at three annas a yard . . . the most intelligent say he is a man who is working for the good of the country, but the *real power of his name is perhaps to be traced back to the idea that it was he who got bedakhili stopped in Pratapgarh*, it is the curious instance of the power of a name.¹⁸

Item: Some men are possessed by Gandhi [reported the Mamlatdar of Bardoli Taluka in 1922] who asks the people to discard foreign cloth, use khaddar and give up drink, the people say they see Gandhi sitting on village wells and spinning on charkha.¹⁹

The grand conflict between nationalism and imperialism, at this juncture, was best reflected in the reception accorded to the Prince of Wales when he visited India towards the end of 1921. The royal visit was organized by the British Government with the objective of undermining the nationalist struggle that was in progress; and it reflected the belief in official circles that nationalism was a superficial phenomenon; and that the common people were still loyal to the British Crown. Gandhi handled the royal visit with masterly skill. '[We]. . . have nothing against the prince as a man,' he stated, '[but]. . . India will refuse to welcome a representative of a system of which she is sick to death.'²⁰ Symbolically, and with a touch of high drama, precisely when the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay harbour on 17 November 1921, the Mahatma was addressing a large crowd of 60,000 at a meeting in the heart of the industrial suburbs in the city, on which occasion he also applied the

torch to a huge pile of foreign cloth which had been collected specifically for this purpose. The progress of the prince through the principal cities of India was, from the British viewpoint, an unmitigated disaster, although the viceroy, Lord Reading, and the members of the British Civil Service, attempted to mask the true magnitude of popular hostility to the royal visitor. Nevertheless, the Prince of Wales wrote to the viceroy about a visit to a university, in particular, in terms which suggested that he suffered from no illusions: 'They tried to kid me by filling up the empty student seats with high school boys, boy-scouts and Europeans. I imagine they hoped I would never get to hear of what had been done, or realise what a b.f. they had made of me!!!'²¹

As the movement to wrest swaraj from the British Government gained momentum, Gandhi and the Congress leaders faced difficult questions of control and management of their followers. The mobilization of the people of a subcontinent as vast as India was a truly stupendous undertaking. This was so partly because non-cooperation rested upon the principles of *ahimsa*, an article of strict faith for Gandhi; but partly also because the Mahatma was apprehensive that outbreaks of violence would provide the British Government with the opportunity, and the justification, to intervene with brutal force, and crush not only the perpetrators of violence, but also the movement as a whole. Moreover, the cleavages of class, community and religion within Indian society could assume a menacing form and erupt into sectarian or communal conflict once violence was accepted as a legitimate instrument of the anti-imperialist struggle. Indeed, even in the city of Bombay, where the Congress possessed a formidable organization, the demonstrations against the Prince of Wales soon led to violence between Hindus and Muslims, on the one hand, and Parsis and Christians, on the other. Much more serious was the Moplah uprising of Kerala, where a Muslim peasantry, incensed over the issue of Khilafat, attacked the British Government at the same time as it went on a rampage against the superior Hindu rural classes in the region.

The possibility of violence against the British Government, or between different classes and communities within Indian society, haunted Gandhi all the more because he was contemplating, at that time, the use of the most militant weapon available to a satyagrahi, namely, refusal to pay taxes to a government which had lost the moral right to rule. To initiate this phase of the movement, Gandhi had selected the taluka of Bardoli in Surat district. The patidars, the peasant proprietors of this region, had been organized for a non-violent struggle under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel, one of Gandhi's principal lieutenants, and the no-tax campaign at Bardoli was expected to shake the edifice of the British Raj to its very foundations.

However, when the patidars of Bardoli were all set to defy the British Government, an act of violence in the United Provinces persuaded the Mahatma to suspend the movement for non-cooperation altogether. The occasion was provided by the peasants of a village called Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district, who, when fired upon by the policemen of a local thana, retaliated by burning down the thana and killing their oppressors. Gandhi saw in this ugly episode the symptoms of a deep-rooted malaise. The incident also revealed the extent to which violence had struck roots at the very core of Indian society; and the less than profound impact which the propagation of *ahimsa* had made on the people. From all over the country, whether it was the United Provinces, or Bombay, or Gujarat, or Kerala, or Rajasthan; or the Provinces of the Northwest and the Northeast, where substantial Muslim communities, deeply agitated over the Khilafat issue, were located; the perceptions reaching out to the Mahatma suggested that an intensification of the struggle would lead to violent uprisings against the British Raj. Such uprisings would provide the authorities with the pretext to unleash a reign of terror, in which non-violent and legitimate forms of political protest would be put down with the same ruthlessness as violent and 'illegitimate' forms of political protest. Moreover, as the example of Kerala demonstrated, the prospect of social conflict between different religious communities was also a prospect which loomed ominously in the horizon. For these reasons, the Congress Working Committee, at a meeting held in February 1922, at the personal initiative of Gandhi, called off the non-cooperation movement, and advised the people to embark upon a programme of constructive activity, having as its objective the regeneration of Indian society.

4. The Swarajist Interlude

When the nationalist leaders surveyed the political scene after the suspension of non-cooperation in the spring of 1922, they discovered that the countrywide agitation of epic proportions, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in the autumn of 1920, had suddenly been transformed into a fragmented and disorganized force. That matters had come to such a pass was hardly surprising. For the leaders, no less than for the rank and file, the suspension of non-cooperation ostensibly appeared to be an ill-advised move; more particularly because it came at a moment when nationalist fervour was at its peak; and the people of India, so it appeared, were ready for a final struggle. Lajpat Rai, the distinguished leader of the Punjab, spoke for many when he wrote to the Congress Working Committee:

Our defeat is in proportion to the greatness of our leader . . . Mahatmaji pitched his standard too high. . . . To change the hearts of mobs in such a

way as to make it impossible for them to indulge in such brutalities without changing the hearts of governments that rule over them, is an impossibility . . . leaders of political campaigns for freedom cannot afford to wear their hearts on their sleeves. . . .²²

Yet Gandhi, as suggested earlier, had his own reasons for calling off the nationwide movement. In a communication to Jawaharlal Nehru, who had been no less upset at the decision to suspend non-cooperation than Lajpat Rai, or C.R. Das, or Motilal Nehru, he observed: 'I assure you that if the thing [i.e., the non-cooperation movement] had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle but certainly a violent struggle.'²³

To suggest a way out of the dilemma, the Congress created a committee, called the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, to review the events of the past two years and to chalk out an appropriate course of action. This committee, on completing its task, found it difficult to recommend a clear plan of action. Its members were unanimously of the view that it was inadvisable to launch a fresh civil disobedience movement in the prevailing circumstances. However, on the crucial question whether members of the Congress ought to contest elections for the reformed legislatures, there was a serious difference of opinion. Some of the members of the committee, the so-called 'no-changers', were against entry into the legislatures. Others, who were called 'pro-changers', believed that it was advisable, indeed, necessary to contest elections for entry into the legislatures, if only with the objective of wrecking them.

Prominent among the pro-changers were men like C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Vithalbhai Patel. The logic of their position, late in 1922, after the virtual collapse of the non-cooperation movement, needs to be briefly recapitulated at this point. The people of India, Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, rural and urban folk, had demonstrated an extraordinary solidarity, and a remarkable capacity for self-sacrifice, in response to the Mahatma's call for a non-violent struggle against the British Government. Nevertheless, when the people were all set for a decisive trial of strength, Gandhi, for reasons which were perfectly valid in themselves, had called off the movement. The powerful sentiment for the attainment of swaraj, which had been so skilfully conjured into existence by the Mahatma, in such diverse classes and communities in India, urgently called for a creative outlet; an outlet, moreover, that would help the people attain the objectives which the prophet of non-violence had enumerated in 1920. What could be more appropriate than transferring the nationalist struggle on to the arena of the new legislatures created by the Act of 1919? The essence of the 'pro-changers' strategy lay in capturing the reformed legislatures and utilizing them to put an end to British control over India's destiny. The

battle for swaraj had been fought earlier through a non-violent confrontation between the satyagrahis and the British Government of India; this struggle was now to be fought in the central legislature at Delhi; and in the provincial legislatures scattered throughout the land. The British Government had created these representative institutions, with their special constituencies and their limited franchise, in order to curb the forces of nationalism. But the pro-changers sought to transform the legislatures into instruments of the national will, which the skilful leadership of the Mahatma had aroused to an unprecedented level of political awareness in the post-war years.

C.R. Das, who, along with Motilal Nehru, spearheaded the move for a new nationalist strategy, put the case for council entry, as he termed it, forcefully in his presidential address before the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress in December 1922. Defining nationalism as a process 'through which a nation expresses itself and finds itself', Das described the freedom movement as the 'great purposeful unfolding' of the political destiny of India. That this 'purposeful unfolding' of the national destiny was to be achieved through non-violent non-cooperation, the novel weapon of struggle fashioned by the Mahatma, Das argued, was a matter on which no one entertained any doubts. The Constitutional Reforms of 1919 were actually designed to frustrate the movement for swaraj. However, consistently with the principles of non-cooperation, it was incumbent upon all true nationalists to first establish control over the legislatures through the electoral process, and then to destroy them. In the words of C.R. Das:

I am . . . of opinion that the system of the reformed councils . . . is absolutely unsuitable to the nature and genius of the Indian nation. It is an attempt of the British Parliament to force a foreign system upon the Indian people. . . . Boycott of the reformed councils, to my mind, means that such steps must be taken that these councils may not be there to impede the progress of Swaraj. The only successful boycott of the councils is either to bend them in a manner suitable to Swaraj or to end them completely. That is the way in which I endorse the motion to boycott the councils.²⁴

Notwithstanding the oratorical skill with which C.R. Das and other Swarajists presented the case for a change in nationalist strategy at the Gaya Congress, they were unable to win over a majority of the leaders who had responded to the Mahatma's call for non-cooperation in 1920. In view of this, they created a new organization called the 'Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party', with C.R. Das as president and Motilal Nehru as general secretary. The Swaraj Party, as it was popularly known, proclaimed its overall loyalty to the creed of the Mahatma. But instead of seeking freedom through the weapon of boycott, it sought to undermine the British Raj through obstructing the conduct of business in the new

legislatures, which had come into existence as a result of the Reforms of 1919.

Although C.R. Das was the president of the Swaraj Party, he was so deeply involved in the politics of Bengal that the affairs of the party at the national level were largely left in the hands of Motilal Nehru. The election manifesto of the new party, which was issued in October 1923, described the Swarajists as 'a party within the Congress, and as such an integral part of the Congress'.²⁵ The Swarajists were committed, through their manifesto, to the cause of India's freedom. But they sought to secure this objective through means slightly different from those suggested by Gandhi. Instead of relying wholly on the boycott of the institutions created by the British Raj, the Swarajists were prepared to carry the struggle into the enemy's camp by entering the councils. The vigorous campaign conducted by the Swarajist leaders in 1923, and the popularity of their stance with the electorate, were admirably reflected in the impressive support which they won in the elections. In the Central Legislative Assembly, the Swaraj Party won 41 out of 101 elective seats. It fared equally well in the provincial legislatures of the United Provinces, Assam and Bengal. Indeed, in the case of the Central Provinces it won an outright majority.

The Central Legislative Assembly which met in New Delhi in January 1924 was the first representative body in which organized nationalist opinion, in the form of the Swaraj Party, could express views on questions relating to the welfare and the destiny of the people. Motilal Nehru, as the leader of the Swaraj Party, was the dominating figure in the legislature. He secured a victory of very considerable proportions when, at the very outset, he was able to draw the Muslims and the Moderate members of the assembly into a loose alliance with the Swaraj Party. The resulting coalition, the so-called Nationalist Party, possessed the strength in numbers to out-vote the official members and government stooges in the Central Legislature. Such a consummation placed in the hands of the Swarajists a most formidable weapon in their campaign to wreck the new constitution from within the councils.

The strength of the Nationalist Party in the Central Legislature, the core of which party was made up of the Swarajists, made itself felt at the very commencement of the new session. The constellation of political groups, which had been brought together by the adroit leadership of Motilal Nehru, embarked upon a well-organized campaign to wrest political concessions from the British Government. The opening shot was fired by a private member who moved a resolution recommending the appointment of a Royal Commission to review the Constitution of 1919 in such a manner as to secure for India the status of a self-governing dominion within the British Empire. Immediately thereafter,

Motilal Nehru presented an amendment to this resolution proposing that a new constitution be framed through a Round Table Conference, drawing upon leaders who represented different schools of political thought in India. As was to be expected, this demand was summarily rejected by Sir Malcolm Hailey, the spokesman of the British Government in the Central Legislature, who argued that the Constitution of 1919 had provided for a machinery of review after a decade, that is, in 1929. But Motilal Nehru would have nothing to do with assurances which amounted to acts of grace on the part of the British Government. Moreover, he was of the opinion that the Constitution of 1919, upon which Hailey had taken his stand, was a piece of legislation designed for the sole purpose of thwarting the aspirations of the people for political liberty. If the British Government could see its way to satisfying these aspirations, then the Swarajists and their allies would extend a hand of co-operation to the alien rulers. But if it took a contrary position, then, Motilal declared, 'we shall, like men, stand upon our rights and continue to be non-cooperators.'²⁶

That the British Government should reject the demand for a Round Table Conference, on the understanding that it would lead to political autonomy for India, surprised no one, least of all Motilal Nehru and the members of the Nationalist Party in the Central Legislature. Yet the Swarajists and their allies were able to score a very substantial victory over the official bloc in the Assembly, when 76 members voted in favour of Motilal Nehru's amendment, and only 48 voted against it. From this victory, the Nationalist Party proceeded to defeat the government and its supporters on a number of issues: for instance, the first four budgetary demands were rejected in their entirety; and a finance bill, too, was thrown out altogether. However, the Constitution of 1919 conferred on the viceroy the power to veto decisions of the legislature. As a result, the Swarajist victories were not productive of any political effect, since the viceroy, on each occasion when the government was defeated, took recourse to the special powers with which he had been invested by the constitution. Nevertheless, the effect of the Swarajist victories, which were broadcast throughout the land by a jubilant nationalist press, was tremendous, and made the British Government look extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the educated classes of India.

With the victories which the Swaraj Party and its allies won over the British Government in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Swarajist stock stood extremely high in nationalist circles. Consequently, C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru made a renewed bid to win over the Mahatma to their viewpoint towards the middle of the year. However, for Gandhi, non-violence was a philosophical truth to which he was deeply committed; and the strategy and tactics of non-cooperation were inextricably

linked to his overall view of the human condition. Small wonder, then, that the Swarajist argument that the happenings of 1922 — the incident at Chauri Chaura and the consequent suspension of non-cooperation — called for a new look at the political situation; indeed, for a change of tactics in the struggle against imperialism; wholly failed to move the Mahatma. Yet Gandhi was not blind to the fact that differences between nationalist leaders worked entirely to the advantage of the British Government. Later in the year, therefore, he reached an agreement with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, whereby their party became an integral constituent of the Indian National Congress. This understanding, which signified a closing of the nationalist ranks, was eventually ratified at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress, in December 1924, which was held under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi. As he said on this occasion:

Not much need be said about the status of equality given to the Swaraj Party. I wish I could have avoided it, not because the party is not worthy, but because I do not share its views about council entry. But if I must remain in the Congress, even lead it, I must recognize the facts as they are. It is easy for me to go out of the Congress . . . but it was not, so I thought and still think, in the interests of the country for me to take that step. The Swaraj Party represents, if not a majority, at least a strong and growing minority in the Congress. If I were not to divide the Congress on the issue of its status, I was bound to agree to its conditions, so long as they were not in conflict with my conscience. They are not, in my opinion, unreasonable. The Swarajists want to use the name of the Congress for their policy. A formula has to be found for their doing so without their pledging or binding the no-changers to their policy. . . .²⁷

Notwithstanding the spirited opposition which the Swaraj Party and its allies offered to the British Government in the Central Legislative Assembly during 1924-5, the Nationalist Party conjured into existence by Motilal Nehru was actually a very fragile alliance of disparate political formations. The Party included, besides the Swarajists, Moderates and Muslim members, who were by no means fully committed to the policy of wrecking the constitution from within the councils. Indeed, the provincial leaders who had gathered under the umbrella of the Swaraj Party, particularly those hailing from the Central Provinces and the Presidency of Bombay, also resented the constraints which the strategy of breaking up the constitution from within imposed upon them. These provincial leaders — M.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar and B.S. Moonje, among others — were men who had taken to politics under the aegis of Tilak; and although they had, as a matter of expediency, accepted the Swarajist label in 1922, they were actually 'responsivists', who believed in working the constitutional system which had been created in 1919,

although their strategic objectives were no different from those of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, on the one hand, and Mahatma Gandhi and the no-changers, on the other.

These differences in ideology between different constituents of the Nationalist Party were greatly heightened by the constitutional prerogatives enjoyed by the viceroy and the provincial governors under the constitution of 1919. As mentioned earlier, even though the Swarajists and their allies succeeded in rejecting crucial bills in the central and provincial legislatures, the use of the veto by the viceroy, and the provincial governors, robbed such victories of any political effect. Such a stalemate, not surprisingly, encouraged dissidence to rear its head in the nationalist ranks, particularly on the part of the erstwhile Tilakites. The dissidence of the former Tilakites assumed the form of an open revolt when S.B. Tambe, the Swarajist leader in the assembly of the Central Provinces, accepted nomination to the Executive Council of the Governor. In this act of revolt, Tambe had the tacit if not the open support of M.R. Jayakar, the Swarajist leader of the Presidency of Bombay.

What Mahatma Gandhi and the no-changers, who supported his stance, had feared in 1922, thus actually came to pass. Nationalists who had fought elections and entered the assemblies, presumably in order to wreck them, found the lure of executive office irresistible, and abandoned the wider objectives which had inspired them to enter into a constitutional 'dialogue' with the British Government of India, at the central as well as the provincial levels. The Swarajists who remained true to their mandate thus found themselves on a very slippery path, indeed. However, with C.R. Das no more, Motilal Nehru was quick to see the writing on the wall. He soon came to the decision that an orderly retreat was necessary. On 8 March 1926, therefore, he led the Swaraj Party out of the Central Legislative Assembly, in order to demonstrate that he and his followers would have nothing to do with an imperial government which was so unsympathetic to the popular desire for Swaraj.

The Swarajist walk-out from the Central Legislative Assembly in 1926, bears eloquent witness to the sensitivity of leaders like Motilal Nehru to the winds of change that were blowing through the subcontinent. In 1922, after the Chauri Chaura incident and the suspension of non-cooperation, the social anger of the people, and their desire for a show-down with the British Government, called for a programme of action wherein popular sentiment could express itself through militant action. Precisely for this reason, the Swarajists had attempted to transform the central and provincial legislatures into theatres of confrontation between nationalism and imperialism. Yet, by 1926, the legislative arena

chosen by the Swarajists for this purpose appeared to be a disadvantageous location for giving battle to the British Government. Indeed, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the period 1922-6 was, in a manner of speaking, a most trying period for nationalists of different persuasions in India. Not only had the agitation launched by the Mahatma come to an abrupt end in 1922, but cleavages between different religious communities, as well as between different generations of nationalist leaders, had become manifest in the body politic. The most alarming development of the period under review was the breakdown of the Hindu-Muslim entente, which the Mahatma had so skilfully conjured into existence during the heroic days of non-cooperation. This development, in striking contrast to the vindication of the nationalist position in the legislatures by the Swarajists, ensured that Hindus and Muslims spoke with discordant voices on the crucial political issues of the day, thereby seriously weakening the challenge which they could jointly mount to the British rulers of the land. Nor was the communal problem the only problem which confronted Gandhi, Motilal and the leaders of their generation. They further sensed that a younger generation of nationalist leaders — represented best of all by radicals like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose — were becoming increasingly critical of their strategy and tactics. This generation of nationalists wanted to launch a frontal attack on the British Government and secure for the country *purna swaraj*, or complete independence, instead of Dominion Status. Over and above this, as we shall later see, the younger generation of political activists also wanted to transform nationalism from a purely political into a social and economic phenomenon. They believed that the resolution of India's political bondage, as well as of her poverty, could only be achieved by reorganizing the polity on socialist principles, whereby the wealth of the country would be collectively owned, and the rewards of labour equitably distributed between different social classes.

In this context of a widening rift between Hindus and Muslims, and between older and younger nationalist leaders, the British Government appointed the so-called Simon Commission, with a membership drawn exclusively from the British Parliament, to review the political progress made by India since the Reforms of 1919. That the British Government did not think it fit to associate any Indian with the Simon Commission, at a point in time when nationalism had become so powerful a force in the country, gives us a rare insight into the lofty arrogance of the imperial psyche. Yet this arrogance was a blessing in disguise for nationalism in India. Practically all classes and communities in the country came together in their hostility to the Simon Commission. Consequently, when in 1928 the members of this exclusively European

commission toured the length and breadth of the land, in order to exchange views with political leaders of different persuasions in different regions, they were greeted everywhere by hostile demonstrations, which in their numerical strength no less than in their social composition, recalled the popular enthusiasm against the British Raj in the tumultuous days of non-cooperation.

At the same time as he appointed the Simon Commission, Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, challenged the nationalist leadership to devise a constitution for India that would be acceptable to all classes and communities in the country. Behind this challenge lay the assumption that the nationalist leadership in India was drawn from an irresponsible body of men; that the people of the country had still to acquire the consciousness of nationhood; that the great religious minorities, the Muslims in particular, would not make common cause with the Hindus in presenting joint constitutional demands before the British Government; and last but not the least, that Princely India remained largely untouched by the forces that were at work in the provinces of British India.

The challenge thrown by Birkenhead could not be overlooked by the nationalist leaders. A decision was taken at the Madras session of the Congress, in 1927, to draft a constitution for an independent India in consultation with other political groups. In pursuit of this decision, an all-India Conference met shortly afterwards under the presidency of M.A. Ansari, the distinguished Muslim leader. At this Conference, a Sub-Committee with Motilal Nehru as its chairman and the eminent jurist and liberal politician, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, as one of its members, was created to draft such a constitution.

The Nehru Report, as the constitution drafted by Motilal Nehru, with the assistance of Sapru, came to be known, was a document which was destined to play an important role in the political destiny of India. In outlining a political system for India at this juncture, two basic problems had to be resolved. First, any proposed constitution needed the endorsement of the major religious communities, namely, the Hindus and the Muslims. Secondly, the proposed constitution also needed the endorsement of the younger nationalists, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were pressing for a radicalization of the national movement, and who had adopted as an immediate objective the attainment of *purna swaraj* by India.

In tackling the communal problem the authors of the Nehru Report adopted an attitude which combined strategic firmness with tactical flexibility in finely balanced proportions. They believed that, in the long run, the communal problem would cease to loom so large and menacingly on the political scene. 'We are certain that, as soon as India is free

and can face her problems, unhampered by alien authority and intervention, the minds of our people will turn to the vital questions of the day. . . . Parties will be formed in the country and in the legislatures on entirely other grounds, we presume,'²⁸ observed the Report. Yet, whatever be the strategic prospect, it was clear that, in the immediate future, some tangible assurances would have to be held out to the Muslims if they were to join hands with the Hindus, and the other communities, in presenting common political demands to the British Government. To this end, the Nehru Report made a number of recommendations: first, it suggested that a declaration of rights, assuring religious and political liberty to all citizens of India, be enshrined in the constitution; secondly, it resolved that two new provinces be created, namely, Sind and the Northwest Frontier Provinces, wherein the Muslims would be in a majority; finally, the Nehru Report decreed that the practice of separate communal electorates be abolished, though seats for Muslims were henceforth to be reserved in the central as well as in the provincial legislatures.

5. The Radicalization of The National Movement

While Motilal Nehru, and the senior Congress leaders who had rallied around Mahatma Gandhi, laboured to devise a constitution for India which would resolve the communal problem, they were equally concerned about the climate of opinion which was crystallizing around the younger generation of nationalists. This generation of nationalists was not only reaching out to a new ideology as the basis of the struggle for freedom, but it was also impatient of the relatively moderate strategy and tactics of their seniors, and sought to launch forthwith a frontal attack upon the British Government in India.

No one symbolized the idealism and the outlook of the younger generation of nationalists better than Jawaharlal Nehru. Along with tens upon thousands of young men, very few of whom could claim his upper-class background, Jawaharlal Nehru had been irresistibly drawn to the charismatic personality of the Mahatma during the heady days of the non-cooperation movement; just as he had also been drawn to the revolutionary weapon of satyagraha as the best means of liberating India from British bondage. The suspension of non-cooperation, in 1922, left him baffled and perplexed at the maddening logic which had persuaded Gandhi to call off an agitation of subcontinental proportions. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed in his prison cell: 'We were angry when we learnt of this suspension of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts.'²⁹ The unlovely communal strife which characterized the political scene after the suspension of non-cooperation was equally a matter of concern for

the nationalist leaders, since it appeared to question the very basis of nationhood for India.

Perhaps the uncertainties which haunted Jawaharlal Nehru, and other young nationalists, at this juncture encouraged them to explore new worldviews in order to arrive at a fresh understanding of the freedom struggle in India. While he was still in Britain, Jawaharlal Nehru had acquired a certain familiarity with Fabian socialism, and with the social and economic vision which the advocates of this movement posed before the intelligentsia. Yet he knew very little about Marxist theory until the middle 1920s, although, as he observed later, he looked upon the 'Bolshevik revolution . . . [as] a very exciting episode indeed. . . .'³⁰ Perhaps the crucial stimulus to Jawaharlal Nehru's intellectual development was provided by the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels, which he attended as a representative of the Indian National Congress in 1927. Here was a gathering of the leaders of the nationalist movements of Asia and Africa, under the auspices of the international socialist movement, to discuss questions of common interest, and to frame a common attitude towards imperialism. In defining the objectives of the Indian National Congress on the eve of the Brussels meet, Jawaharlal Nehru talked for the first time of the 'liberation of the poor and oppressed from all exploitation', over and above the necessity of 'freedom from foreign rule'.³¹ He also gained a new appreciation of the relationship between imperialism and capitalism; of the need for oppressed societies to come together; and, most important of all, of the desirability of building nationalist movements around the aspirations of peasants and workers.

From the Brussels Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru proceeded to Russia, on the strength of an invitation to visit the Soviet Union. This journey was undertaken at a crucial juncture in the reconstruction of Russia on the basis of an entirely novel vision of Man and Society. The boldness of the Soviet experiment, and the manner in which it sought to reshape the moral and material parameters of a polity of very substantial proportions, fired the imagination of Jawaharlal Nehru, more particularly because he was conscious of the strength of conservatism in India. Yet he was not blind to facets of Soviet reality, or to aspects of Bolshevik theory, which were the reverse of commendable. India, with her teeming millions, her age-long problems of poverty and exploitation, heightened by imperial rule, could not but look upon the Soviet experiment with sympathy and interest; and even profit from Russian experience. Yet the epic scale of Indian society, and its historical character as a civilization of antiquity, called (so Jawaharlal Nehru believed) for solutions which were in keeping with the traditions of India, at the same

time as they reached out to a new conception of the 'good society', resting upon the twin principles of socialism and popular democracy.

Jawaharlal Nehru's attempt to formulate along novel lines the ideological premises of the freedom struggle in India came at an extremely timely moment. As suggested earlier, the movement led by Gandhi during the years 1920-2 had attracted in great numbers the intelligentsia, as well as the popular urban and rural classes, to the cause of Indian freedom. The notion of militant non-violence, as advocated by Gandhi, had appealed enormously to the people of India. Yet the manner in which Gandhi suspended the non-cooperation movement in 1922, and the communal cleavages which showed up immediately afterwards, caused a good deal of disquiet among the leaders as well as the intelligentsia. What were the bases upon which the different classes and communities of India could come together in a state of nationhood? To what extent was the question of freedom from British rule purely a political question? To what extent, equally, was it also a social and economic question? If, besides the rich and the middle classes, the toiling poor in the cities and in the villages were also to be drawn into the struggle for freedom, then how could their interests be protected in an independent India? How could the traditional loyalties to community and religion — loyalties which were so powerfully manifest in the Indian psyche — be transformed into a new loyalty to a nation-state? Last but not the least, what were the moral and material values which would sustain nationhood in India? These were some of the issues which agitated a new generation of nationalist leaders committed to the liberation of India from British rule.

There were, needless to say, no easy answers to such questions. However, as a result of his explorations in socialist ideology, Jawaharlal Nehru was able to formulate a number of propositions of crucial significance to the freedom struggle in India. He now perceived the liberation movement in India as part of a wider struggle between the capitalist polities of Europe, on the one hand, and the subject societies of Asia and Africa, on the other. He also perceived an organic relationship between the capitalist mode of generating wealth, which characterized the countries of Western Europe, and the phenomenon of imperialism, which obliged such countries to establish relations of political and economic domination over the countries of what is now termed the Third World. Within India, British imperialism had conjured into existence a strong bond of interest with the feudal classes and with sections of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. This unholy alliance expropriated for the benefit of imperialism what the peasants and workers produced through the sweat of their labour. The relationship of superordination and subordination between Britain and India provided the basis, so

Jawaharlal Nehru believed, of the strategy and the tactics which the Congress could profitably adopt in the anti-imperialist struggle. In the first instance, it was necessary for nationalists in India to establish links with other nationalists in Asia and Africa, in order to devise a common stance in the worldwide struggle against imperialism. Next, the national movement in India would have to overthrow the hegemony of the exploiting classes at the same time as it overthrew the dominance of British imperialism over the subcontinent. Only such a movement, which concerned itself with the interests of the toiling classes in rural and in urban society, would be able to transcend the cleavages of class, community and religion, and lay the basis of a cohesive national polity in India.

While Jawaharlal Nehru was framing his design for the socialist transformation of India, a number of organizations like youth leagues and kisan sabhas were being founded in different parts of the country, under the umbrella of the national movement. The crystallization of such organizations spoke of the desire of hitherto inarticulate classes for an appropriate share in the distribution of social and economic power. Jawaharlal Nehru sensed the opportunity afforded by this ferment to put forward his new programme of political action as widely as possible. As he observes in his *Autobiography*:

Everywhere I spoke on political independence and social freedom and made the former a step towards the attainment of the latter. I wanted to spread the ideology of socialism especially among Congress workers and the intelligentsia, for these people, who were the backbone of the national movement, thought largely in terms of the narrowest nationalism. . . .³²

Perhaps the substance of Jawaharlal Nehru's argument is best expressed through extracts from the observations which he made on two such occasions:

You have probably often condemned British imperialism because you suffered it. But have you thought it is but a manifestation of a world phenomenon? And this world phenomenon is the direct outcome of a system of society which prevails in the greater part of the world today and is called capitalism. . . . We must aim, therefore, at the destruction of all imperialism and reconstruction of society on another basis. That basis must be one of cooperation; and that is another name for socialism.³³

We are often accused of preaching class war and of widening the distance between the classes. The distance is wide enough, thanks to capitalism. And nothing can beat the record of capitalism in that respect . . . because class war is none of our creation. It is the creation of capitalism . . . by trying ostrich-like to ignore it, we do not get rid of it. Only by removing the classes are we likely to bring peace.³⁴

The mood of radical militancy in the younger generation of nationalists was reflected equally powerfully in the person of another rising star in the political firmament of India. Subhas Chandra Bose came from a distinguished family of Bengal; and after a brilliant career at Calcutta University, he proceeded to Britain for higher studies, and competed successfully for the Indian Civil Service in 1920. However, due to the influence of Vivekananda, he was drawn towards the freedom struggle and, in 1921, after quitting the Civil Service, he entered politics under the aegis of C.R. Das.

Bose's distinction as an intellectual, his charismatic presence and his superb organizational skills assured for him in a short span of time a very prominent position in the political scene in Bengal. Indeed, when C.R. Das died in 1925, Bose became a commanding figure in the Provincial Congress Committee, devoting special care to the organization of the youth as well as of the working class of Bengal. Towards the end of the 1920, he was one of the few leaders of the younger generation with a reputation that had spread to the far corners of the subcontinent.

Although Bose did not share, in a formal sense, the radicalism of Jawaharlal Nehru, he fully endorsed the hostility of the latter towards the British Government. Indeed, as already emphasized, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose articulated the sentiments of an entire generation of the intelligentsia in their militancy towards imperialism; and in their desire to seek battle with the British Government with the objective of liberating India. At the Madras session of the Indian National Congress, held in 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru sponsored a resolution stating that 'The Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete independence'.³⁵ Although such sentiments had been voiced earlier from the platform of the Congress, at the Madras session the resolution reflected the consciousness of an intelligentsia which was ready to translate thought into purposive social action.

6. The Struggle for Purna Swaraj

While Motilal Nehru was drafting the constitutional proposals which are known to posterity as the Nehru Report, the radical temper of the younger generation of nationalists was an issue of the most serious concern to him. After all, this impulse for an ideological transformation of the nationalist struggle, which refused to have any truck with British imperialism, and which also sought to base the struggle for freedom upon the aspirations of the 'wretched of the earth', was spearheaded by none other than his son, Jawaharlal Nehru. To Motilal Nehru, it was clear that, in the altered climate of 1928, the erstwhile formula of Swaraj, which Gandhi had defined in so nebulous a fashion, and which he had utilized to draw different classes and communities to the countrywide

agitation of the years 1920-2, would no longer meet the approval of the younger generation. Yet Motilal also believed that the slogan of complete independence would be premature, in view of the overall strength of conservative sentiment in the freedom movement. The constitution drafted by him, therefore, stipulated that the status of India within the British Empire should be identical with the status of self-governing colonies like Australia or Canada, which were moving towards the formal attainment of Dominion Status.

Although the Nehru Report was a document which dealt with the crucial issues of contemporary politics with catholicity and vision, its specific proposals failed to win the approval of some significant sections of society in India. Soon after the Report was issued, the leaders of the Congress met in Calcutta in December 1928, to discuss its provisions. The Muslim leaders present at the Calcutta meeting felt that, in view of the plural character of society in India, some of the provisions of the Nehru Report — particularly those recommending a unitary constitution, and the abrogation of communal electorates — would not be acceptable to their constituents. Indeed, in a conference held slightly later, in March 1929, the Muslim leaders presented a radically different prescription for the constitutional future of India. Such leaders envisaged a liberated India as a federal polity, wherein the minorities, particularly the Muslim community, would protect their interests through the mechanism of separate electorates.

In view of the leading role which he had played in preparing a constitutional blueprint for India, Motilal Nehru was the obvious choice for the presidency of the Congress in 1928. As the time approached for the annual session at Calcutta, Motilal sensed the opposition which had crystallized to the constitutional future which he envisaged for the country. Two important sections of society, the Muslim community and the younger generation of nationalists, seemed to have serious reservations about the political future held out in the Nehru Report. To Motilal, as indeed to Gandhi, the latter constituency, that is, the youthful leadership in the nationalist ranks, appeared to be the more important constituency. For, without the support of the youth of the country, there was little prospect of a successful struggle against the British Government of India. Confronted with this crisis, Motilal turned to the Mahatma for guidance as well as for support. How crucial was the role which Gandhi played at this juncture, is vividly reflected in the proceedings of the annual session at Calcutta. In the Subjects Committee, where various issues were debated before they were taken up for discussion in the open session, the question whether the Nehru Report was to be adopted in its entirety, and Dominion Status accepted as the national objective, became a subject of heated discussion. The younger members

of the Subjects Committee, prominent among them Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, were insistent in their demand for *purna swaraj*. Indeed, but for the Mahatma's presence, and his healing touch, it is doubtful whether the revolt of the younger leaders could have been controlled by the older leaders. As it was, what emerged in the Subjects Committee was in the nature of a compromise. The Nehru Report was accepted in its entirety; but on the crucial issue of Dominion Status, the Congress leadership decided that if the British Government did not concede this demand within the span of a year, they would initiate a movement of civil disobedience to win *Purna Swaraj* for the country. The compromise adopted in the Subjects Committee was then approved in the open session of the Congress.

The decisions taken by the Indian National Congress at Calcutta were as much a triumph for Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and the senior generation of nationalist leaders, as they were a triumph for Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and the younger radicals within the nationalist ranks. An important by-product of the Calcutta Congress was the return of the Mahatma to active politics after an interval of three or four years, during which period he had engaged himself in constructive work in his ashram. As we have indicated earlier, the support which the Mahatma extended to Motilal and the moderate nationalists at Calcutta was crucial for the acceptance, albeit in a modified form, of the clause on Dominion Status by the Congress, at least for the space of a year. Furthermore, it was clear that the Mahatma, with his moral authority enormously enhanced through the programme of social regeneration which he had initiated during the years of political inactivity, would once again lead his countrymen in a non-violent assault upon the British Raj.

The developments within the national movement were followed with close interest by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. A Tory with a sensitive political antenna, Irwin was fully conscious of the winds of change that were blowing across India. A little earlier, Irwin had committed a monumental blunder in approving the exclusively British membership of the Simon Commission, which had been constituted to review the political development of the subcontinent. However, as Irwin's perception of politics in India sharpened, he realized the extent to which the desire for freedom had taken firm root in the country. 'There is quite clearly a strong movement to the Left among educated Hindu political opinion . . .'³⁶ he wrote to the Secretary of State for India in January 1929. The viceroy was convinced that the situation called for a statesmanlike gesture on the part of the British Government which would clear the climate of distrust that had come to plague relations between the British leaders and the nationalist leadership of India. Irwin commenced toying with the idea of initiating a dialogue, over and above the Simon Com-

mission, between a group of representative Indian leaders and a delegation of British parliamentarians. He also came to the conclusion that it was necessary for the British Government to publicly declare that India would, over the years, acquire a status comparable in all respects to the status of the self-governing dominions of the British Empire. Irwin took the opportunity offered by a vacation in Britain, in the middle of 1929, to place his views before the British Government. As a result of these deliberations, Irwin, on his return to India, declared that the British Government would soon call a Round Table Conference to discuss the political future of India; and further that 'the entire issue of India's constitutional progress' was 'the attainment of Dominion Status'.³⁷

Irwin's declaration of 1929 was superbly timed. It obliged Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and other leaders of the Congress to re-examine the decision of the Calcutta Congress, that if Dominion Status was not bestowed upon India by 1929, then an agitation for *Purna Swaraj* would be mounted against the British Government. As a result of the conciliatory gesture by the viceroy, a group of nationalist leaders assembled at Delhi to hammer out a common response to the viceregal declaration. At this meeting, predictably, Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and their peers differed from Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were for an outright rejection of the Irwin declaration. However, the Delhi Manifesto, which was drafted by the more moderate nationalists, welcomed the proposal for a Round Table Conference on the understanding that such a 'conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion Status.'³⁸ A meeting between Irwin and Gandhi, along with Motilal Nehru and others, held shortly afterwards, nevertheless revealed a wide gulf between the nationalist position and the position of the British Government towards the question of political autonomy for India.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress, held in Lahore in the last week of December 1929, under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, was largely a vindication of the stance adopted by the radical nationalists *vis-à-vis* the liberation movement. In his presidential address, Jawaharlal Nehru, for the first time in the history of the Congress, held out a socialist critique of the world situation, as well as of the Indian problem, before the assembled delegates. Emphasizing the international context in which the capitalist democracies of Western Europe had come to dominate the rest of the world, through the extensive empires which they had carved out in Asia and Africa, Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out that the struggle for the freedom in India, although it had to be fought by the people of the subcontinent, was an organic constituent of a wider struggle between imperialism and nationalism in the contemporary world. Nor did he make a secret of his ideological commitments:

'I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of Industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than have the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy.'³⁹ Given his commitment to a socialist vision, Jawaharlal Nehru's perception of the internal problems of India, which called for urgent attention, was forthright and unambiguous:

India means the peasantry and labour, and to the extent that we raise them and satisfy their wants will we succeed in our tasks and the measure of the strength of our national movement will be the measure of their adherence to it. . . . [The] Congress, it is said, must hold the balance fairly between capital and labour and zamindar and peasant. But the balance has been and is terribly weighted on one side and to maintain the status quo is to maintain injustice and exploitation. The only way to right it is to do away with the domination of any one class over another.⁴⁰

Such radical statements from the presidential chair clearly reflected a qualitative transformation in the temper of the nationalist movement. This transformation was equally vividly reflected in the adoption, also at the Lahore Congress, of a resolution which stated that the goal of the Congress was 'complete independence'; and which authorized the national leadership to launch a movement of civil disobedience, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, having as its objective the liberation of India from British rule.⁴¹

The deliberations of the Lahore Congress thus placed a heavy responsibility upon the Mahatma. The decision to entrust the destiny of India at so crucial a juncture to Gandhi, the veteran of numerous non-violent struggles, also reflected the locus of sentiment within the premier national organization. If the moderate leaders of the Congress were willing to accept the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru in defining the ideological content of the anti-imperialist struggle, they were equally convinced that such a struggle had to be waged by a judicious combination of firmness and flexibility through the weapon of non-violent protest fashioned by the Mahatma.

As the sole leader of a satyagraha reflecting the aspirations of a nation of 400 million, Gandhi selected his battleground and his tactics with great care. He first placed before the viceroy, Lord Irwin, a list of demands designed to mobilize behind the call for *purna swaraj*, broad sections of society, particularly men of business and industry, the professional classes, and peasants and workers. But the principal item, a fantastically simple item, in this list of demands, upon which Gandhi focused his attention, was the repeal of the tax upon salt, which product

was a state monopoly. The decision to focus upon salt, a prosaic product of daily consumption, may at first blush appear quixotic in the extreme. But as subsequent events were to demonstrate, the Mahatma revealed himself as a tactician of genius in selecting the issue upon which the civil disobedience movement was to hinge in the first instance. Prosaic salt may well have been. Yet it was a product closely linked to the daily life of millions of peasants and workers, for whom the trifling quantum of the salt tax was a sum of considerable magnitude. Moreover, the refusal to pay the salt tax was singularly well-designed to heap ridicule upon the authority of the British Government in India.

Gandhi was equally skilful in selecting the locality in which he violated the salt laws, as a signal to the entire nation to unleash a non-violent assault upon the British Raj. He initiated a *padayatra* from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad in the company of 78 trusted associates representing different religious communities and regions in India. This *padayatra* took Gandhi and his band to the remote coastal village of Dandi on the Gulf of Cambay, where the satyagrahis 'manufactured' salt in defiance of the laws of the land. The rural districts through which Gandhi marched were the setting for two of his earlier campaigns; the peasantry of the region was utterly devoted to the Mahatma. The march was a monumental success. At one level, it taught the local peasants the meaning of satyagraha and swaraj. 'Who can help liking this poor man's battle? The cruel tax is no respecter of persons. It is, therefore, as much the interest of the Mussalman as that of the Hindu to secure its abolition. This is the first fight undertaken in the name of God and for the sake of the millions of the paupers of this country,'⁴² Gandhi stated repeatedly in the course of the march. So much for the local peasantry. But at the national level, the daily accounts of Gandhi's march, and his words of advice to the rural folk of Gujarat, reached out to the people of India through the speeches of Congress activists and through nationalist newspapers, thus preparing the entire nation for the struggle.

The civil disobedience movement which Gandhi initiated at Dandi on 6 April 1930, through the symbolic manufacture of salt from sea-water, was in some respects comparable to the movement which he had organized a decade earlier. As in 1920, the Mahatma reached out to a diversity of classes and communities in a society of epic scale. Again as in 1920, the movement was articulated by the Indian National Congress, through organized networks in cities, townships and *casbahs*, in a substantial proportion of the half a million villages of the subcontinent. Over and above this, Gandhi's moral authority, plus the grievances which affected the peasantry and tribal communities in different parts of the country, where the Congress lacked a formal presence, simultaneously triggered off populist agitations of primordial fury, which had

very little to do with non-violence as a mode of political action. Finally, there were two significant differences between the agitation of 1920-2 and that of 1930-1. The industrial and business elites of India, formally organized in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), rallied to Gandhi's call in 1930 in a manner they had refused to do earlier, partly due to the economic distress caused by the great depression of 1929, and partly also due to a clearer perception on their part of their economic interests. If industrial and commercial participation presented an accretion of strength to the nationalist movement, then the alienation of the Muslim leadership and the Muslim community, with the distinguished exception of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Pathans, was a source of serious disquiet to Gandhi and his associates. Since the Muslim leaders had refused to endorse the Nehru Report, they also refrained from persuading their followers to seek involvement in the civil disobedience movement, thus posing before Gandhi and the Congress a problem to which there appeared no easy solution.

The widespread support which the civil disobedience movement received from different classes and communities — from industrialists and businessmen; from the professional classes and the *petite bourgeoisie*; and from peasants, workers and tribal communities — greatly undermined the authority of the British Government over India. The reaction of a civil servant, who visited Bombay during the spring of 1930, was by no means atypical of the profound pessimism which seized hold of the British in India when the agitation was at its height:

There is no doubt about the great strength of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bombay City [stated Sir Harry Haig]. The Gujaratis have thrown themselves into it with all their hearts, and by their activities and demonstrations have created the belief among themselves, which is not without its effect upon others (Maharashtrians, Parsis and even Europeans), that a national movement has been started which will prove irresistible. The success of the movement, the wide and intense support it is receiving, has surprised everyone. The Congress House openly directs the movement of revolt against Government, Gandhi caps fill the streets, volunteers in uniform are posted for picketing with the same regularity and orderliness as police constables. . . . It is not surprising that all this intense feeling, with its open and apparently successful defiance of Government, has produced a profound impression in Bombay as a whole. Nothing, perhaps, has done more to deepen that impression than, the series of processions that have been organized by the Congress. Their numbers, the discipline, the organization and the brushing aside of the ordinary functions of police control of traffic have combined to produce a vivid impression of the power and the success of the Congress movement.⁴³

Small wonder, then, that the viceroy, Lord Irwin, came to believe that the First Round Table Conference of British and Indian leaders, which met in Great Britain to decide the constitutional future of India, lacked the moral authority to take any major decisions without the participation of representatives of the Indian National Congress. The way out of the impasse, as Irwin saw it, was to draw Gandhi and the Congress leaders into a constitutional dialogue; and to fashion out of such a dialogue a system of politics which could protect British commercial and strategic interests in India, at the same time as it met the basic demands of the Congress led national movement. Whether such a reconciliation between nationalism and imperialism was at all possible was an altogether different question.

One aspect of Gandhi's greatness lay in his willingness to explore every possible solution to a problem. Hence, he had a series of meetings with the viceroy in the autumn of 1930, to explore the possibility of an understanding, whereby the Congress could participate in the Round Table Conferences and call off the non-violent agitation which had succeeded in demonstrating, beyond the shadow of a doubt, how much popular support it enjoyed in the country. Of course, Gandhi's earlier demand, that the consultations in Britain between British and Indian leaders should relate to the 'substance of Indian independence', had, in a manner of speaking, already been conceded, since the First Round Table Conference had unanimously endorsed the idea of a federal polity, in which the provinces of British India and the princely states would participate as constituent and largely autonomous units. However, in opening up a dialogue with Irwin, as the first step towards a political truce, Gandhi's real concern lay with the radicals within the Congress, represented best of all by Jawaharlal Nehru, who fervently believed that the civil disobedience movement needed to be carried through to the bitter end.

Outside the Congress, at this juncture, yet within the wider framework of the freedom struggle, stood revolutionary nationalists like Chandrasekhar Azad, or Bhagat Singh or Surya Sen. Such men were totally committed to the notion of a violent instead of a non-violent assault on British imperialism. The revolutionary nationalists were drawn close to a socialist position in the late 1920s, though their new ideological orientation did not rule out dramatic acts of terrorist violence, which were designed to undermine the authority of the British Government, and to persuade the common people of India — particularly peasants, workers and the intelligentsia — to rally to the nationalist cause. The vision which inspired such men was admirably expressed in a pamphlet entitled *The Philosophy of Violence*,⁴⁴ written by the revolutionary activist Bhagwati Charan Vohra, and this vision was

not without influence upon the wider community, particularly the intelligentsia. At the same time as the followers of Gandhi violated British laws through satyagrahi action, the revolutionary nationalists in different parts of India assaulted officers of the British Government; or made spectacular demonstrations in assemblies; or captured, if only for a brief while, British treasuries in the mofussil; in a bid to undermine the fabric of the British Raj. The activities of such revolutionaries complemented the non-violent campaign of civil disobedience; and their effect upon popular consciousness was no less decisive than the effect of the satyagraha movement.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the nationalist struggle over which he presided, the Mahatma was able to reach a settlement with the viceroy, which is popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. According to this settlement, the Congress was to suspend the civil disobedience movement. The British Government, on its part, would release activists from prison and annul the ordinances which declared the Congress and its sister organizations unlawful bodies. Moreover, the Congress was to participate, along with the representatives of other Indian parties, in the scheme of constitutional reforms to be discussed at the Second Round Table Conference: 'Of the scheme thus outlined federation is an essential point; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards, in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, the defence; external affairs; the position of minorities; the financial credit of India; and the discharge of obligations.'⁴⁵ The settlement can in no manner be construed as an unalloyed victory for Gandhi. The Mahatma had to concede several significant points to the viceroy. Moreover, radical and youthful nationalists, within the Congress or without it, looked upon the conduct of negotiations with the British Government as politically inexpedient. Yet the spectacle of Lord Irwin parleying with Mahatma Gandhi was not without its gains for the cause of nationalism. For the representative of the King Emperor, and the spokesman of the greatest imperial power known to history, to embark upon a dialogue, on terms of equality, with the undisputed leader of the liberation movement in India was in itself a great triumph for the latter.

Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress and the most outstanding leader from India. In this capacity, the Mahatma was pitted against British politicians of distinction, as well as against fellow-Indians, hand-picked by the imperial authorities, to represent the counterpoised constituencies of class, community and religion, which the British Government had all along exploited to retard the constitutional progress of India. In a memorable speech before the Federal Structure Committee of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi spelt out the substantive issues

facing the assembled delegates, British and Indian, in terms which admitted of little ambiguity. Proceeding, in the first instance, to spell out the sources of the populist strength of the Congress, he stated:

The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organisation we have in India. It has had nearly fifty years of life . . . it is what it means — national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interests. It claims to represent all Indian interests and classes. . . .

[Above] all, the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land, in its 70,000 villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve the interests of those dumb millions; and so you do find now and again apparently a clash of interests. But, if there is a genuine real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress, that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organisation, and it is becoming so progressively.⁴⁶

Given the constituency of tens upon millions of peasants for whom he spoke as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress, the Mahatma was of the view that the attainment of the objective of *Purna Swaraj*, which his party had set itself, was the only possible means of resolving the 'Indian problem'. The recognition of India as an independent polity, by His Majesty's Government, was by no means incompatible with a mutually beneficial partnership between Britain and India as members of an Empire transformed into a Commonwealth of Nations. As against this, the continuation of a master-slave relationship was so distasteful to the people of India, that Britain could perpetuate it only through brute force. Such a prospect was morally repugnant and politically disastrous. 'Take that nation [India] and this nation [Britain] together,' the Mahatma observed, 'and I again ask myself and ask you whether, that an India free, completely independent as Great Britain is, whether an honourable partnership between the two cannot be mutually beneficial, even in terms of the domestic affairs of this great nation. And so, in that dreamy hope, I have approached the British Isles, and I shall still cherish that dream.'⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, Gandhi's attempt to raise the constitutional dialogue between British and Indian leaders to an altogether new level foundered on the rocks of imperialist manoeuvre and sectarian intransigence. As indicated earlier, the delegates to the Round Table Conferences were so chosen by the British Government as to ensure that every religious and communitarian cleavage in the social fabric of India would manifest

itself to thwart any national consensus which might threaten imperial hegemony over the subcontinent. As against the nationalist viewpoint of the Mahatma, three cores of discontent, each one of them resting upon a distinctive political formation, crystallized in the course of the deliberations over India's constitutional future. The representatives of princely India, although they had welcomed the notion of a federation at the First Round Table Conference, were now extremely coy about the precise terms upon which the princely states could participate in such an arrangement. The leaders of the Muslim community voiced the fears of their constituents at the prospect of an autonomous federation, and sought assurances that Muslim interests would not be overwhelmed in such a polity by the dominant Hindu community. Perhaps the third locus of opposition to the nationalist worldview was the most disturbing of all, if only for the reason that it had not surfaced earlier in constitutional dialogues. The representatives of the Depressed Classes, whose cause Gandhi had espoused over the years, repudiated their link with Hindu society, and called upon the British Government to accord them the right to vote in separate electorates in the political system which was to be devised for India.

That the Mahatma should find the deliberations of the Second Round Table Conference frustrating was hardly surprising. The very composition of the Indian delegation guaranteed that the genuine voice of nationalism, reflecting the aspirations of the common people, would be lost in the cacophony of divisive voices raised by the representatives of princely India, on the one hand, and those of communitarian and religious constituencies, on the other. Precisely for this reason, it was vital that a leader with a commanding presence, capable of transcending the limitations of class, community and religion — and who could this be other than Mahatma Gandhi — should put before the political elite of Britain the passionate desire of the people of India to shape their own political destiny. Such an exercise was worthwhile, even though the British Government, weighed down as it was by the problems of the Great Depression, failed to react to Gandhi's stirring call for a statesman-like gesture in response to the growing strength of nationalism in India.

Small wonder, then, that after Gandhi's return to India, the civil disobedience movement was taken up once again by the Congress. That the second phase of this agitation, which sought to paralyse the British Government through non-violent action, should manifest itself in a slightly muted note was only to be expected; for the coercive power available to the imperial authority was sufficient to break the resistance of satyagrahis through sheer attrition. At the same time, the British Government did not permit the non-cooperation of the Congress to assume the proportions of a veto. Quite the contrary. Yet another

Round Table Conference, the third in the series, was held in 1933; and the various sub-committees of the conference, which were assigned specific responsibilities, proceeded with their allotted tasks, in order to provide the basis for a major piece of legislation, concerning the system of government in India, to be presented to the British Parliament for its approval.

Perhaps the Franchise Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference was saddled with the most difficult task of all. The reasons for this are easy to discern. In a democratic polity, the electoral system substantially influences the manner in which power is exercised by different classes and communities. To heighten the divisions of society in India, and to build up counterpoints to the rising tide of nationalism, the British had created a system of separate communal electorates, the first beneficiaries(?) of which were the Muslims of the subcontinent. What the Muslims attained in 1909, B.R. Ambedkar, the refractory leader of the Depressed Classes, claimed on behalf of his community before the Franchise Sub-Committee. Needless to say, this demand was forcefully opposed by Gandhi and other Indian leaders present at the Second Round Table Conference.

Since the Franchise Sub-Committee could not come to an agreement about the structure of the electoral system, the matter was resolved by the so-called Communal Award of Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister. This award, which reflected the extent to which the British Government married the rhetoric of a vacuous liberalism with the reality of a ruthless imperialism, contained a new element, over and above those elements which had hitherto characterized the structure of constitutional reform in India. Besides conferring separate electorates upon the Muslims and other religious communities, the Prime Minister's Award also conferred separate electorates upon the Depressed Classes. Gandhi discerned in the Communal Award a sinister design to foster yet another fatal cleavage in Indian society. He was not against the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, so long as the caste Hindus, too, were entitled to vote in such reserved constituencies. But to create separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, the Mahatma believed, was to break up Hindu society into antagonistic and warring social fragments and ensure the perpetual subordination of the Depressed Classes by the caste Hindus:

To appreciate the harm that separate electorates would do them one has to know how they [the Depressed Classes] are distributed amongst so-called caste Hindus and how dependent they are on the latter. So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisect and perpetuate it. . . .

You will have to appreciate my feelings in the matter by remembering that I have been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. . .

But I know that separate electorates is neither a panacea nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have been ground under. I, therefore, respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes [becoming operative] I must fast unto death.⁴⁵

The 'fast unto death' which Gandhi undertook on 20 September 1932, to effect a cancellation of the Communal Award, as it concerned the Depressed Classes, shook Hindu society to its very foundations. The leaders of the community were appalled at the prospect of the Mahatma sacrificing his life in order to atone for the indignity and worse which the Hindus had heaped upon the Depressed Classes over the centuries. Prominent men like Tej Bahadur Sapru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, M.R. Jayakar and a host of others, representing orthodox or liberal opinion within Hinduism, hastily arranged a conference to seek a solution to the problem. Over and above this, outstanding Depressed Class leaders like B.R. Ambedkar, M.C. Rajah and P.N. Rajbhoj, also addressed themselves to the business of mapping out an appropriate place for their community within Hindu society.

The meetings between the caste Hindu and the Depressed Class leaders resulted in an agreement which rendered the creation of separate electorates for the lowly Hindu castes, as set out in the Communal Award, wholly unnecessary. From the very outset, it was clear to the Hindu leaders who mediated in the situation that the Mahatma's stance was a most reasonable one. As he had suggested to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, he was prepared to concede to the Depressed Classes the reserved seats which they could legitimately claim as their own. What horrified him was the introduction of separate electorates for such classes; which provision would not only introduce a fatal cleavage within Hindu society, but would also prove detrimental to the interests of the Depressed Classes, dependent as they were for their moral and material welfare upon the upper caste Hindus. The only way to improve the lot of the lowly castes, Gandhi believed, was to bring about a 'change of heart' within Hindu society, so that the upper castes would accord a status of dignity to the lowly castes. Any attempt at creating a distinctive Depressed Class constituency through the mechanism of separate electorates would bring down upon them the wrath of the superior Hindu classes on whom they were so utterly dependent.

The Mahatma's fast unto death aroused the conscience of wide sections of Hindu society. 'To find a parallel for [sic] the anguish of Septem-

ber 1932 we have to go back to Athens twenty three hundred years ago when the friends of Socrates surrounded him in prison and urged him to escape,'⁴⁹ observed Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a distinguished leader of the Congress very close to Gandhi. All over the country, in the citadels of orthodoxy in the plains of the Ganga or the Kaveri, organized Hinduism, its conscience touched to the quick, came out in support of the Mahatma, and threw open temples and other sacred premises to members of the Depressed Classes. The six days during which Gandhi fasted within Yeravada Central Prison brought about a more fundamental change in Hindu society than was true for as many decades prior to 1932. It was as though a moral power of overwhelming proportions had transformed the Hindu social order and persuaded the superior castes to accord a new status of dignity to the lowly castes whom they had exploited for centuries.

B.R. Ambedkar was the most militant of the Depressed Class leaders at this juncture. He had belittled from various platforms Gandhi's attempt at bringing about a social and moral revolution within Hinduism. But even Ambedkar found himself unable to resist the Mahatma when he undertook a fast unto death to secure a cancellation of the Communal Award. After a series of meetings between the caste Hindu and the Depressed Class leaders, an agreement was reached whereby the Communal Award was rendered superfluous. According to this agreement, which is known as the Poona Pact, Ambedkar and the Depressed Class leaders gave up the provision of separate electorates in exchange for the right to select a panel of candidates from their community, one of whom could then be formally elected by high and low caste voters jointly. Gandhi thus succeeded in neutralizing a grave threat to the unity of Hindu society; over and above which, he generated among his co-religionists a moral fervour which provided the basis for a transformation of social relations within Hinduism.

6. The Twilight of The British Raj

While the Poona Pact between the caste Hindu and the Depressed Class leaders represented a substantial victory for nationalism, it would be a mistake to imagine that British imperialism was vanquished once and for all through this agreement. Indeed, despite the assurances which Lord Irwin, the viceroy, had given to the nationalist leaders on the eve of the First Round Table Conference, the Conservative Party in Britain, which featured so prominently on the political scene, was opposed to the devolution of power into Indian hands. During the early 1930s, therefore, a great debate convulsed the Conservative Party as to whether it was necessary to concede more power to the leaders of the national movement in India. Ranged on one side were men like Winston

Churchill, who vociferously opposed any constitutional progress in the subcontinent. Churchill believed that the Congress-led nationalist movement was a very weak force that enjoyed no support other than that of the professional, commercial and industrial classes. A slightly different stance was adopted by liberal conservatives like Sir Samuel Hoare, who held the view that the rising tide of nationalism in India was a phenomenon which could no longer be overlooked. While it is true that the 'liberal' conservatives triumphed over the 'die-hards' in the Conservative Party, the victory of the former by no means ensured the emergence of India as an independent polity in the not too distant future.

This was so for a number of reasons. While the liberal conservatives would have nothing to do with the policies of die-hards like Churchill, there is little reason to believe that they wanted to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire in India. Perhaps their intentions *vis-à-vis* India, and the role which they envisaged for Britain in the subcontinent are best reflected in the terms of a constitutional bill which was soon introduced in the British Parliament. Hoare and conservatives of his persuasion were no longer interested in exercising direct administrative control over the sprawling provinces of India, as the British had done for the past century and more. Hence, they were willing to concede considerable autonomy to the legislatures, resting upon limited franchise rights, in the provinces of British India. However, such autonomously ruled provinces were to be drawn into a federal polity over which Britain would exercise overarching economic and strategic dominance. To ensure such dominance, the constitutional system envisaged by the British Government drew upon the minorities, and upon princely India, in such a manner as to ensure that the representatives of nationalism within the federal polity would be held in check by the representatives of the minorities and princely India.

The motives which underpinned the constitutional system embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935 were by no means hidden from the leaders of the Indian National Congress. Throughout the years under review, therefore, Gandhi maintained unrelenting political pressure upon the imperial authorities through a civil disobedience movement of national proportions, though it was not possible for him, after his return from the Second Round Table Conference in December 1931, to sustain an agitation of the same momentum as the one which he had initiated in the spring of 1930. Gandhi was fully supported by radical nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru in his assessment of British imperial purpose and British constitutional design. Yet some of the Congress leaders believed that it would be pointless to wage an endless struggle against British imperialism; and they wanted to cash upon the possibili-

ties thrown open by the constitutional system created in 1935. The prospect of autonomy within the provinces, these leaders argued, offered the Congress an opportunity to promote national interests at the same time as it prepared itself for a final assault on the British Government.

The national movement led by the Congress, as it had gathered strength under the aegis of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, in the years surveyed in this volume, was an admirable instrument for such an assault upon British imperialism, leading to the liberation of India from a century and a half of political bondage. Even before 1920, the year in which Gandhi rose to national prominence, the Congress had grown into an organization reaching out to the far corners of the subcontinent, and drawing classes and communities belonging to different religions and cultures into the mainstream of nationalist activity. Yet, if the Congress support base prior to 1920 was countrywide, it nevertheless rested largely upon the professional and the commercial classes. The tens of millions of the poor in the cities and the villages of India, the overwhelming majority of the population of the country, had very little to do with it. Under the leadership of the Mahatma, however, the Congress was not only revitalized organizationally, but it also succeeded in drawing the workers, peasants and tribals into the struggle against the British Government. Over and above this, the Mahatma put before the people a novel method for waging political struggles, which drew upon traditional moral resources, at the same time as it moulded these resources into an ideological weapon appropriate to the transformation of a civilization of antiquity into a modern nation. Gandhi's was a magnificent achievement, which not only strengthened the national movement, but also made it clear to the British that their empire in India was doomed to destruction. Nor did his achievements end here. Alone among his contemporaries, he attempted to disseminate the sentiment of nationhood among the Depressed Classes and tribal communities, and draw them into a closer relationship with the mainstream of Indian society. Indeed, the extent to which Gandhi's call for an anti-imperialist struggle reached out to the lowly Hindu castes, and to the tribal folk, was a clear indication of his success in creating a popular movement of invincible power for the liberation of India.

The contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru to the growth of the national movement was no less significant than that of Mahatma Gandhi. To appreciate this contribution, it is necessary to dwell briefly upon the 1920s, the period when Jawaharlal was drawn into nationalist politics. Even a superficial look at the non-cooperation movement reveals that Gandhi succeeded in mobilizing the people in a nationalist struggle in a manner they had never been mobilized before. Yet the Mahatma's

resounding success posed several crucial questions, some of which called for urgent answers during the years following the suspension of non-cooperation. Could the question of liberation from British rule be resolved simultaneously with the problems of class exploitation and class domination within Indian society? Or was it necessary to postpone the resolution of internal problems till such time as the struggle against imperialism had resulted in a victory for the nationalist cause? Gandhi never came to grips with such issues in 1920-2, despite his success in shaking the edifice of British rule to its very foundations.

The socialist vision which Jawaharlal Nehru propagated among the people of India sought to provide a novel ideological poise to the national movement. Jawaharlal believed that it would be a fatal mistake to defer the resolution of economic conflict within Indian society till such time as freedom had been attained. He further believed that the exploitation of the lowly by the rich classes within India was inextricably linked to the exploitation of the subcontinent as a whole by Britain. As Jawaharlal observed on more than one occasion, the Indian problem was merely one manifestation of a worldwide conflict between nationalism and imperialism; and any strategy for the liberation of enslaved societies like India would be simultaneously called upon to resolve the problem of social inequity within such societies. Such a perception of the struggle for freedom was a pre-condition to a liberation in which the creative powers of the people would become the basis of their moral and material welfare. The speed with which the radical ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru spread among the intelligentsia and the underprivileged classes suggests that the people of India were anxiously searching for a revolutionary ideology as the basis of the freedom struggle. The Indian National Congress, which under Jawaharlal Nehru's inspiration was drawn to such an ideology, and which enjoyed the support of millions of the citizens of the subcontinent, was therefore admirably equipped to lead India to political independence and to a non-violent social revolution.

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Chapter I

The Struggle for Swaraj (1919-1922)

J.C. Jha

1. National Politics and the Congress at the Conclusion of the First World War

THE FIRST WORLD WAR quickened the pace of capitalist development in India and also the process of politicization, bringing previously 'submerged' groups into formal politics in India.¹ The whole climate of politics changed. The country was in a state of suppressed excitement at the end of the war.² The capitalist class wanted more power and wider scope for investments; the middle class expected much from the impending constitutional changes which might open new avenues of growth for them. The common man, however, had modest hopes: a lightening of the burdens which were crushing him.³ No wonder there was 'a profound change in the political loyalties of the country'.⁴

In the rural areas there was unrest, especially among the peasants and labourers. The disgruntled soldiers⁵ back from the war fronts, had a new sense of liberty. The people of the Punjab had bitter memories of the oppressive methods of conscription as well as of the terrible suppression of the freedom fighters of the S.S. *Komagata Maru*.

Indeed, there was a certain linkage between the new mass awakening in India and economic ills like rising prices,⁶ which hit hard the peasants and workers, scarcity conditions, and epidemics. Besides, Bolshevik ideas were filtering in and the anti-imperialist agitation abroad had some impact on the mind of the people in India.⁷

Inflation and price rise had adversely affected the people in the urban areas as well, and the situation was 'ripe for revolution'.⁸ In spite of 'differences in wealth and status, the ties of interest and sentiment between the members of a caste were so strong that they acted as cohesive social units in situations of political crisis.'⁹ Among the textile workers of Bombay, the members were 'tied to each other by the common role they perform in the process of production, by their consciousness of this role, and by the reflection of this consciousness in political behaviour.'¹⁰

The Muslims, by and large, were agitated over the treatment of Turkey and the Caliph. In fact, the end of the war 'brought forward the complex and ticklish problems emanating from the terms' on which peace was to be concluded with that country.¹¹ The moderate members of the Muslim League who supported the constitutional reform proposed in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were expelled from the party in its annual meeting in December 1918. On the other hand, radicals like Abdul Bari showed their respect to M.K. Gandhi, the hero of the Indian struggle in South Africa, and called him 'the intrepid leader of India', liked by Hindus as well as Muslims.

The Home Rule League was still active and its branch in New York had started a monthly, *Young India*, in July 1918 to present authentic news and views on India to the outside world.¹² From February to May 1919 Lala Lajpat Rai with two colleagues travelled in the U.S.A. on behalf of the League, propagating the Indian nationalist point of view and distributing copies of the pamphlets, *Self-Determination for India* and *Get Together on India*.¹³

Tension was building up between the British Indian Government and important leaders of the National Congress because of the tours and anti-government speeches of the latter.¹⁴ Within the Congress also there was infighting and differences of opinion. Thus in August 1918, on the eve of the Bombay Special Congress, Gandhi informed Tilak that he was not attending this session, nor the conference called by the Moderates as 'my views differ from those of both'.¹⁵

The Indian National Congress at this time was a vast unwieldy organization. Its special session was boycotted by the Moderates who held a separate meeting on 1 November under the presidentship of S.N. Banerjea. This All-India Conference of the Moderate Party gave birth to the National Liberal Federation of India. In view of the great popularity of the Congress, however, this new body decided to maintain Congress tradition and norms.¹⁶ Criticizing the new leadership of the Congress, Banerjea alleged that they no longer represented 'the sentiments and principles before which national rivalries disappear'.¹⁷

At the end of the war there was a growing restlessness among the peasants, especially in Bihar and U.P. They started participating in large numbers in the annual sessions of the Congress,¹⁸ and from 1919 onwards they participated in all the great nationalist agitations.

The end of the war also saw 'the embryonic birth of Leftism' in India. Between 1918 and 1920 about 125 unions were affiliated to the All-India Trade Union Congress.¹⁹ In January 1919 the trade unions displayed some militancy and in the following period there was a wave of strikes in India, paralyzing the whole industrial structure. There were demands

for higher wages, dearness allowance, bonus and shorter hours of work. One could see the growing class-solidarity and class-consciousness among the workers, though not yet a clear socialistic consciousness.²⁰

Gandhi was very keen on getting the Montford scheme accepted by the National Congress, but he was not willing to create a serious rift in the organization.²¹ At the same time he did not want to press the Moderates and the Extremists to unite and forsake their respective methods and principles.

The Delhi session of the Congress in December 1918, only a month after the war ended, conveyed to the British Crown 'its deep loyalty and profound devotion' and its congratulations on the successful termination of the war which was waged for 'the liberty and freedom of all the peoples of the world'. While appreciating 'the heroic achievement of the Indian troops', it declared that 'nothing less than self-Government within the Empire' could satisfy the Indians. If India was made free, it said, its place in the British Commonwealth would be put on a firm foundation.²²

The Delhi Congress repudiated the assumption of the Montford Report that India was not yet fit for self-government and demanded the removal of hindrances to free discussion. Reaffirming resolution No. 5 on self-government passed at the special session of the Congress held in Bombay, it demanded full responsible government for the provinces as well. It viewed with alarm the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee which, if implemented, would impede the healthy growth of public opinion and prejudicially affect the successful working of the constitutional reforms.²³

After the war the Congress looked forward to the 'great peace' and elected Tilak, Gandhi and Syed Hasan Imam to represent it at any conference on peace or reconstruction. It imagined that the principle of self-determination enunciated by the European and American statesmen would apply to India as well. But soon it was clear that the pledges made by these statesmen were only 'empty words': the famous Fourteen Points of the American President, Thomas Woodrow Wilson (8 January 1918) were a sham so far as India was concerned.²⁴

2. The Agitation Against the Rowlatt Act, 1919

The year 1919 was 'one of the most fateful' in the history of the Congress²⁵ and the most significant date of this year was 6 April which was observed as a day of 'humiliation and prayer'.

The Rowlatt Bills introduced in the imperial Legislative Council on 18 January 1919 came as a bombshell. The first bill sought to amend the Indian Penal Code to enable the executive wing of the government to

restrain any activity deemed prejudicial to the security of the state. The second bill aimed at giving the Government of India discretionary powers 'to short circuit the processes of law in dealing with political crime'.²⁶

These bills were condemned by almost all sections of Indians. All the same, they were presented to the Council on 6 and 10 March respectively and hastily referred to a Select Committee whose report was obtained on 12 March.

Meanwhile Gandhi, startled by the contents of the Rowlatt Report, as reported in the newspapers, had held consultations with his co-workers and decided to resist the proposed measure.²⁷ Soon he had formed a Satyagraha Sabha for this purpose. Gandhi attended the Central Legislature as a visitor and heard the debate on the bills.²⁸

Gandhi then drafted a satyagraha pledge: In case these bills are passed, 'we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee, to be hereafter appointed, may think fit, and . . . in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property.'²⁹

The Indian newspapers extensively reported the speeches of the Indian members protesting against the bills. Even those who did not fully comprehend the implications of the Bills felt that they were a challenge to their self-respect.

Gandhi, knowing full well the futility of an armed revolt, had already perfected³⁰ a new style of simple but effective protest. He also knew that the people were fed up with the old politics of petition as well as of Extremism and Home Rule. He thought that by introducing religion and ethics into politics he could revitalize the whole political outlook in India. He also brought in the element of renunciation so that he could ensure mass support for his cause.

Already on 26 February 1919 Gandhi had issued a press note on the step he was taking against the Rowlatt Bills which were 'a deep-seated disease in the governing body'. Then on 1 March he had published his first manifesto including his satyagraha pledge.

Some Congress leaders like Surendranath Banerjea, Dinshaw Wacha³¹ and others had condemned the bills but, at the same time, they had disapproved of the scheme of satyagraha as a protest against them.³²

The satyagraha pledge of 2 March 1919 described the bills as 'unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community, as a whole, and the state itself, is based', and expressed the determination that in the case of their becoming law they would not be obeyed.

On 9 March the speakers in a protest meeting included Saifuddin

Kitchlew and Rambhaji Dutt.³³ Within a fortnight about 12,000 people had signed the satyagraha pledge. Bulletins had been issued and the Satyagraha Sabha³⁴ had become very active.

The first part of the Act superseded the ordinary mode of trial by a special procedure when the Governor-General-in-Council ordered this in the interest of public safety.³⁵ The second part would apply when revolutionary movements were 'extensively promoted' and the third part when they spread so much as to endanger public safety. The accused would have no legal representation in the trial and the sole judge of his innocence or guilt would be the executive. No wonder one of the popular cries in the protest in Punjab against this Act was: *Nā vakil, nā appeal, nā daleel* (No lawyer, no appeal, no argument). As Gandhi rightly pointed out, 'it is the alarm which an ordinary innocent citizen pursuing his ordinary affairs of life, would feel in his own home, the insecurity in his every day relations with man and in his cooperation and association with the government of his country as a citizen, that is to be considered.'³⁶

When Gandhi was in Madras as a guest of C. Rajagopalachari, he had an idea in a dream one night that India should observe a *hartal*, a cessation of all business, to protest against the Rowlatt Act. This was the origin of the first concerted and popular countrywide agitation against the British in India. As Motilal Nehru noted, 'a new force was introduced into our politics, a force with the most tremendous potentialities. India's masses were suddenly awakened and the message of satyagraha entered at the humble home.'³⁷ Even those Congressmen who did not agree with the language of the satyagraha pledge, did not disagree with its fundamentals — truth, fearlessness and non-violence, for Gandhi asked them to comprehend the problem spiritually.³⁸

An old Congress leader, V.J. Patel called the measure 'a grave menace to public liberty, a serious encroachment upon the rights which have been guaranteed to us.'³⁹ Another eminent Congress leader Madan Mohan Malaviya⁴⁰ also vehemently opposed the measure. T.B. Sapru⁴¹ called it 'wholly wrong in principle, unsound in its conception, dangerous in its operation and too sweeping and too comprehensive.' Mazharul Haq⁴² called it 'a negation of all law' and 'dangerously inexpedient' and 'entirely inopportune'.

G.S. Khaparde, a Maharashtrian Congress leader,⁴³ later noted that all Indian members of the legislature except C. Sankaran Nair, opposed the measure. Nair did not resign when the others did, but later even he resigned his seat in the Central Legislature.

When the Moderates in the Congress opposed Gandhi's satyagraha, Khaparde advised them not to obstruct his path even though they might

not help him. Srinivasa Sastri, however, called Gandhi 'a straight, unbending, adorable person, but unpractical', one who had not comprehended the Rowlatt legislation and taken 'an absurdly sentimental view'.⁴⁴ Sastri thought that satyagraha was 'not a suitable remedy at all'.⁴⁵ In fact, Sastri tried to convince Gandhi that satyagraha would be a futile exercise, but failed.

Annie Besant⁴⁶ who had initially denounced the satyagraha scheme, now sympathized with Gandhi's plan. The *Kanpur Samachar* was not exaggerating when it reported that the whole country was 'enthusiastically responding' to the call of Gandhi 'as the last desperate effort to get rid of the Rowlatt Bills'.⁴⁷

Gandhi appealed to the viceroy on 11 March, but the government did not relent. On 12 March, Surendranath Banerjea moved an amendment in the Central Legislature, requesting the government to refer the whole matter to the local governments, high courts and public bodies for opinion.⁴⁸ Replying to the government's criticism of Gandhi's satyagraha, M.M. Malaviya remarked, 'When a man of the saintly character of Mr Gandhi, who is the best friend that the Government have in the country . . . has felt it his duty to vow passive resistance in relation to the Bill, that is a matter for the Government to ponder over.'⁴⁹

Gandhi rejected Swami Shraddhanand's suggestion for a no-rent campaign at this stage. He also told D. Wacha that the only antidote to terrorism was satyagraha. It was essentially a method of persuasion effected through reason and self-suffering.⁵⁰ Gandhi announced that satyagraha was 'a process of self-purification'.⁵¹

Gandhi asked his countrymen to suspend all business on 6 April and fast and pray that day. Besides his own Satyagraha Sabha he enlisted the support of the Home Rule League and the Pan-Islamic groups.

The Hindu wrote, 'Whether satyagraha succeeds or fails it is due to our self-respect as the only form of protest left us.'⁵² The *Vartman* expressed shock at the passing of the 'black bill'.⁵³ A Marathi newspaper hoped that now 'all the Moderates and Nationalists will commingle'.⁵⁴

On 23 March Gandhi instructed the volunteers to explain the satyagraha pledge to every intending satyagrahi before taking his signature. He declared that a hartal would be observed on the second Sunday after the publication of the viceregal assent to the bill as a day of protest. Public meetings would be held on that day in all parts of India at which resolutions praying for the withdrawal of the measures would be passed. The Satyagraha Sabhas would work for the success of the demonstration of protest.

Since the original date for the hartal was 30 March and the Delhi leaders did not know about the change to 6 April, Swami Shraddhanand

and Hakim Ajmal Khan organized it on the 30th itself.⁵⁵ The unprecedented unity between the Hindus and the Muslims was symbolized by the speech of Shraddhanand in the Jama Masjid. They shouted 'Bande Mataram' and 'Alla Ho Akbar'. But the authorities did not like this and fired at a procession proceeding towards the railway station. Two boys were killed at Chandni Chowk and many of the injured died later.⁵⁶

As Gandhi expected the hartal in Bombay on the 6th was a complete success. In the Hindi-speaking areas of Bihar and UP, so far backward in national politics, it was also a success, especially in the urban areas. The processions and meetings in Madras city were attended by about a lakh of people.

Then, on 8 April, Gandhi left for Delhi and the Punjab to promote satyagraha there, but on the 9th he was removed from the train at Palwal and sent back to Bombay. By thus restricting the area of his activities the government created a situation of bitterness which ensured that a year later satyagraha became the policy of the Congress organization.⁵⁷ It was even proposed by the Home Department of the Government of India that Gandhi should be deported to Burma.⁵⁸

The restriction on Gandhi's movements immediately led to unrest in cities like Bombay and Ahmedabad and mob violence in many places. The most serious incidents, however, occurred in Amritsar, Lahore and other places in the Punjab. In Amritsar the arrest and deportation of two respected local leaders, Kitchlew, an advocate, and Satyapal, a medical practitioner, led to a virtual conflagration.

Indeed, a new scenario unfolded in Amritsar and some other places; Hindus publicly accepted water from the Muslims. Public meetings were held on 12 April at several places.⁵⁹ Initially not many signs of unrest were visible in the rural areas,⁶⁰ but gradually the stir became widespread.

Since the arrest of Kitchlew and Satyapal, the Punjabis were very much agitated and there were stray incidents from 10 to 12 April. On the 12th, a meeting was announced for the next day, a Sunday, and the day of the Baisakhi festival. This meeting was held on a piece of waste land in Amritsar called Jallianwala Bagh which was closed in almost entirely by walls.⁶¹ It was 'an expression of the spontaneous urge of the people of the city to proclaim that their sensibilities had not been dulled by O'Dwyerean tyranny.'⁶²

The meeting was held in spite of General Dyer's prohibitory orders and there were many peasants in the gathering. Soon after the meeting started, Dyer with a company of young officers, fifty riflemen, forty Gurkhas with *kukris* and two armoured cars, marched to the Bagh to teach the assembled people a lesson. Over 500 of the 20,000 unarmed

Indians who had assembled were massacred. According to the official account 1,650 rounds of ammunition were fired continuously for ten minutes while the crowd was struggling to escape through the narrow exits. According to an eye-witness account⁶³ firing was even directed towards the gates through which the people were trying to escape. Later Lala Lajpat Rai, as the President of the National Congress, gave the Calcutta AICC meeting a vivid account of the outrages committed in the Punjab in the name of law and order.⁶⁴

Martial law was decreed in the districts of Amritsar and Lahore, backdated to 30 March so that Satyapal and Kitchlew already under detention, could be put on trial.⁶⁵ Every passerby had to respectfully greet the Europeans, failing which they were flogged. Amritsar's water and electricity supply were cut off, causing extreme hardship. A rigid curfew was imposed. Anyone suspected of being connected with the Congress was 'fair game for the police'.⁶⁶ According to Dyer's notorious 'crawling order' any Indian passing the lane where a European lady had been killed would have to crawl through it. Even schoolboys were flogged and made to walk long distances.

The Jallianwala Bagh outrage shook the foundations of the British Empire. According to Romain Rolland, 'It was as if the law of non-violence proclaimed by India, stirred European violence or frenzy.'⁶⁷ The *Dainik Bharat Mitra*⁶⁸ asked why poisoned bullets were aimed above the waist. If poisoned, it would not matter, in fact it would be better if they killed outright.

Gandhi admitted his 'Himalayan miscalculation': he should have ascertained before launching civil disobedience whether the people were fit for this exercise.⁶⁹ The Indian victims got compensation at the rate of Rs 1,250 only, while the English victims got lakhs.⁷⁰

After the holocaust at Jallianwala Bagh, Martial Law Commissions tried the serious cases. The prosecution's trump card in these was Hans Raj, who turned approver and was rewarded. According to *The Nayak* the orders under martial law in the Punjab were mainly to punish the revolutionary spirited Sikhs. As P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyar said later, the incidents of the administration of martial law created 'a reign of terror' in the Punjab and shocked the public.⁷¹

Gandhi suspended his satyagraha on 18 April. Meanwhile, in UP, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru had come close to Gandhi, and in Bihar and Orissa, Hasan Imam, Mazharul Haq, Sachchidananda Sinha and Rajendra Prasad had emerged as leaders of the new movement with the *Searchlight* their chief mouthpiece.

The All-India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay on 20 and 21 April 1919 with Malaviya in the chair, took stock of the political situa-

tion. It condemned the enactment of the Rowlatt Act, 'forced through' the legislature by official votes.⁷² It also protested against the orders passed under the Defence of India Act against Gandhi. While denouncing some actions of the excited mobs in Amritsar, Delhi and other places, it demanded a public enquiry into the dropping of bombs from aeroplanes, the use of machine-guns, whipping, etc.⁷³

A committee of the AICC cabled a statement on the sad developments to the higher British authorities. It also urged the Government of India and the Punjab and Delhi authorities to cancel the 'unwarranted action' taken against a person of so saintly character as Gandhi.⁷⁴ It sent Vithalbhai Patel and N.C. Kelkar to England to put their case before the British Government as well as the British public.⁷⁵

The Congress as a body also appealed to the people to maintain law and order and help restore public peace. What was needed at the juncture was a healing touch, assuaging the wounded feelings of the people.

A committee headed by M.M. Malaviya⁷⁶ was formed to prepare a statement and send it to the British Government and the viceroy. It was to issue a rejoinder to the Government of India's communique of 14 April, justifying the Rowlatt Act and condemning the agitation against it. It was also to spell out the real causes which led to a grave situation in the whole country.

Rabindranath Tagore, while renouncing his knighthood, wrote to Chelmsford:

The accounts of insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers — possibly congratulating themselves for what they imagine as salutary lessons.⁷⁷

Gandhi's *Young India*⁷⁸ congratulated the poet on this action.

According to a government report 'the excitement over the Rowlatt Act was due solely to the satyagraha movement' and even that subsided in May 1919.⁷⁹ But soon a fresh satyagraha was being prepared for and, therefore, the district magistrates were asked to explain the innocuous nature of the Act to people loyal to the government.

The AICC meeting of 8 June at Allahabad strongly condemned the promulgation of martial law in the Punjab and the reiteration of this measure on 22 April. It also protested against the order prohibiting C.F. Andrews, the chosen representative of the Indian press, from entering the Punjab, and condemned the oppressive regime of O'Dwyer.

A sub-committee of the AICC visited the Punjab in the last week of June. Besides its original members,⁸⁰ Gandhi and Jawaharlal were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile the official Disorders (Hunter) Committee had started its work. The recommendation of the AICC meeting of 8 June that a Parliamentary Committee or a Commission of persons wholly unconnected with the government policy and action in the Punjab be appointed was ignored and the constitution of the committee left much to be desired.⁸¹ Its method of enquiry was also faulty. C.R. Das appeared before it on behalf of the Congress but eventually the Congress had to withdraw co-operation.

Gandhi issued certain fresh instructions to the satyagrahis in terms of the resolution passed by the Satyagraha Sabha.⁸² The satyagraha would begin once again in July by Gandhi disobeying the order of internment and externment issued against him.⁸³

This time Gandhi advised the satyagrahis against any demonstration or hartal or mass meetings. No civil disobedience would be organized at least for one month after his incarceration. Gandhi emphasized the need of discipline and adherence to truth and non-violence. Swadeshi was to be preached on an intensive and extensive scale. The Hindus were to give their enthusiastic support to the Muslims in their just claims.

Meetings were held to pass resolutions demanding the repeal of the Rowlatt legislation; the appointment of an impartial committee of enquiry into the Punjab disturbances, the administration of martial law; and the revision of the sentences passed by the Punjab Martial Law Tribunals.

At Patna, the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee under Sachchidananda Sinha's chairmanship considered the letter of Gokarn Nath Misra, one of the secretaries of the Indian National Congress, asking Bihar to host the next Congress as Amritsar might not be able to do it. The BPCC agreed⁸⁴ but a Patna daily⁸⁵ wanted the annual session to be held at Amritsar itself for 'the moral effect of not holding the Congress at Amritsar would be disastrous in the extreme'.

The AICC on 20 July demanded that the commission of enquiry for the Punjab be appointed directly by the Crown and that it should consist of persons totally unconnected with the Indian administration. It wanted the enquiry to be open and that the commission should have the power to annul or revise the sentences passed by the Martial Law Commissioners and other tribunals.

Ultimately, the Congress had to fall back on its original plan of conducting its own enquiry through a committee.⁸⁶ Eventually, since Motilal became the President of the Congress, he was replaced by

M.R. Jayakar. The Congress commissioners visited Amritsar, Kasur, Lahore and other places, addressed public meetings and recorded about 12,000 statements. But they preferred not to publish their report before the Hunter Committee's report was published.

The Congress Enquiry Committee took note of General Dyer's evidence before the Hunter Committee which proved that his action on 13 April was 'nothing but a cold-blooded, calculated massacre of innocent, unarmed men and children, unparalleled for its heartless and cowardly brutality during modern times.'⁸⁷ It demanded that Dyer should be immediately relieved of his command.

The AICC felt that the conduct of the Punjab Government and that of the Government of India in relation to the occurrences in the Punjab in April 1919 required 'the most careful consideration of the Congress'.⁸⁸ Already Motilal Nehru had started legal proceedings in the Privy Council against the Punjab atrocities. As C.F. Andrews remarked, Amritsar shook the very foundations of the faith on which Motilal had built up his life.

The Seva Samiti of Allahabad under the able supervision of Shraddhanand and assisted by V.N. Tiwari of the Servants of India Society carried on excellent relief work in the Punjab.

It was proposed by the Congress deputation to England that all the deputations should refuse to give evidence before the Joint Select Committee,⁸⁹ but the Moderates declined to accept this.

According to Lord S.P. Sinha's⁹⁰ statement on 6 August, originally 108 convicts had been awarded the death sentence, 18 of whom had so far been executed. Many cases were in appeal.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had been shocked to hear General Dyer bragging in a railway compartment how he had taught the Indians a lesson at Jallianwala Bagh, saw the numerous bullet marks on the walls there and learnt that a respectable woman had been raped in a house near the lane where the 'crawling order' had been in force.⁹¹

In the Imperial Legislative Council, Kamini Kumar Chandra⁹² raised many questions on 3 September 1919 on the working of the Martial Law Commission in the Punjab. He regretted on 12 September that the government did not appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the charges against O'Dwyer. A few days later, on 18 September 1919, M.M. Malaviya opposed the Indemnity Bill in the Central Legislature.

By October 1919 it seemed clear that the authorities would not allow the Congress to hold its annual session at Amritsar. They were creating obstructions of all types.⁹³ The district authorities were not even willing to allow the session to be held at Lahore or any other important place in the area. The Amritsar deputy commissioner wanted an undertaking

that the Punjab affairs would not be discussed in the Congress. Small wonder that a secretary of the Congress wondered 'what on earth the Congress has to discuss about if not the Punjab question, which is the burning topic of the day and which has rendered the holding of the Congress at Amritsar this year a matter of national dignity and honour.'⁹⁴

By November, however, the government relented. S.P. Sinha reminded the House of Lords that 'any action on the part of the Government that might have the appearance of suppressing or even obstructing a political gathering, which has an All-India character, might have consequences the reverse of those which the noble Lords desire.'⁹⁵

In November itself the report of the Congress sub-committee was out. A pamphlet containing the evidence of the Congress witnesses was issued. Tilak was still away in England but he asked G.N. Mishra to get all the relevant portions on his work in the Congress deputation to England incorporated in the report of the British Committee. The report of the Congress deputation to England and the foreword to the evidence before the Congress sub-committee were to be printed together and circulated at the Amritsar Congress.

The happenings in the Punjab convinced Motilal that it was essential for the Indians to acquire 'some really effective safeguard against their repetitions.'⁹⁶

The Amritsar Congress (December 1919) was dominated by 'a bitterly anti-British spirit'.⁹⁷ This Congress was also 'the epitome of the progress made by the Congress' so far.⁹⁸ There was an unprecedented gathering and one of the highlights was the procession led jointly by the Congress president, Motilal Nehru, and the Muslim League president, Hakim Ajmal Khan.

In his presidential speech, Motilal referred to the 'cruel murder' of hundreds of people at Jallianwala-Bagh as well as to the first fruits of the peace following the First World War in the form of the terrible Rowlatt Act and the Martial Law.⁹⁹ However, he appreciated the royal clemency which enabled the leaders of the Punjab to attend this Congress session.

The Congress demanded the removal of General Dyer and Sir Michael O'Dwyer from their posts. It appreciated Sankaran Nair's resignation from the Executive Council of the Governor-General of India. It asserted that there could be no real peace in India until the Rowlatt Act was repealed, and protested against the recent Indemnity Act.

The report of the Congress sub-committee (25 March 1920)¹⁰⁰ on the Punjab disturbances held that innocent lives and valuable property including Christian churches could have been saved by not unjustly

arresting Gandhi on his way to Delhi and the Punjab, and by not deporting Kitchlew and Satyapal.

The report pointed out that the Punjabis were already incensed against O'Dwyer's administration because of his 'studied contempt and distrust of the educated classes', the methods adopted during the war for conscription, and his suppression of public opinion by gagging the local press and preventing the circulation of national papers in the Punjab.

The Rowlatt Satyagraha had in fact restrained the violent tendencies and passions of the Indians rather than inflamed them or created a spirit of ill-will, the report said. The firing at the railway overbridge at Amritsar had led to mob violence. There was no justification for martial law and it had been unduly prolonged. Moreover, the measures taken under the martial law were, by and large, 'unnecessary, cruel, oppressive and in utter disregard of the feelings of the people affected by them.'

The report called the Jallianwala Bagh massacre 'a calculated piece of inhumanity towards utterly innocent and unarmed men, including children, and unparalleled for its ferocity in the history of modern British administration.'¹⁰¹

The Hunter (Disorders) Committee¹⁰² report presented on 8 March 1920 and released on 26 May 1920 found the disturbances beginning in the metropolis, Delhi, significant. It described the circumstances in which the AICC declined to co-operate after 12 November. The roots of the unrest in the Punjab, it said, could be found in the general state of unrest and discontent among the people, especially in the urban areas.

The Hunter Committee took note of a message from Shraddhanand to Gandhi which stated that, 'under the present conditions in India, the violation of laws without producing an upheaval among the masses (for which neither you nor any satyagrahi is morally responsible) is impossible.' It also quoted out of context a part of Gandhi's manifesto of 18 April, viz., 'when I embarked upon a mass movement I underrated the forces of evil. . . .' From another passage by Gandhi it cited the following: 'We have found by bitter experience that whilst in an atmosphere of lawlessness, civil disobedience found ready acceptance, *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) from which alone civil disobedience can worthily spring, have commanded little or no respect.' On the basis of these stray references the committee tried to prove that the leaders of the satyagraha were helpless before mass hysteria.

The Minority Report of the Hunter Committee felt that there was no rebellion as such, nor any organization for that purpose.¹⁰³ The conjectural connection between the Punjab disturbances and the ferment in

Egypt, the machinations of the Afghans, or the Bolshevik influences, could not be established.

The Government of India endorsed the findings of the Hunter Committee and found the action taken by the authorities 'generally justified'.¹⁰⁴ But they agreed with the committee that Dyer should have given a warning to the crowd before ordering firing. Moreover, his action in continuing to fire on the crowd after it began dispersing was indefensible.

The AICC in its meeting on 30 and 31 May 1920 decided to petition the British Parliament to initiate impeachment proceedings against O'Dwyer and asked the British Congress Committee and the Congress delegation in England to take the initiative.¹⁰⁵ It demanded the repeal of the Rowlatt Act and appropriate action against General Dyer, Colonel Johnson, Sri Ram Sud, Malik Saheb Khan and others. It also asked for the refund of the fines imposed on the people.

The AICC also protested against the policy of the Secretary of State for India on the Punjab affairs and criticized the British Government for accepting the main recommendations of the majority report of the Hunter Committee and reiterated that satyagraha was not responsible for the Punjab happenings, rather the teachings of Gandhi and the satyagraha movement had 'a great restraining influence on the people' in all parts of India.

Indeed, the Rowlatt Satyagraha had proved that Gandhi was an all-India leader of immense potential. He had created a strong organization for satyagraha and had brought ethics into politics. No wonder he considered his participation in the Congress proceedings at Amritsar as his 'real entrance into the Congress politics.'¹⁰⁶

3. The Pan-Islamic and Khilafat Movements

During the last quarter of the 19th century a Pan-Islamic movement had been launched in India with some guidance from the Middle East. This movement remained dormant in the first decade of the 20th century, but at the end of the First World War it gathered momentum. Since Turkey was an ally of Germany and fought against the British, the Muslims of India were in a predicament. Their religious head (Caliph or *Khalifa*) was the Sultan of Turkey and their fears for his fate were in conflict with their loyalty to the British Raj. Since there were many Muslims in the British army the British Government assured the Indian Muslims that Turkey would not get a raw deal at the end of the war.

However, the terms of the armistice which ended the war dashed the hopes of the Indian Muslims for Turkey was deprived not only of her lands but also of its Sultan who was put under the control of the allied

powers. This led to protests by Indian Muslims after the Treaty of Sevres was concluded.

The Khilafat movement aimed at defending the *Khalifa* and securing the position of the followers of Islam in India. Gandhi wrote to the viceroy immediately after the war conference in Delhi stressing that the rights of Muslim states and Muslim sentiment regarding their places of worship should be given due regard. The AICC, at its meeting in Bombay on 20 and 21 April 1919, took note of the hurt feelings of the Indian Muslims whose leaders, the Ali Brothers,¹⁰⁷ were still under internment.

The AICC decided to represent to the British Government that an important cause of popular discontent in India was 'deep and universal feeling among Indian Mohamedans regarding Caliphate and Holy Places'.¹⁰⁸

A few months later¹⁰⁹ Gandhi wrote to Abdul Bari of Ferangi Mahal that the test of satyagraha lay in the future of Islam in India. On 27 September, an all-India Khilafat conference at Lucknow demonstrated the Muslim feeling for the Sultan of Turkey and its Empire. Gandhi could not attend it, but he had addressed a few days earlier (on 18 September) a Khilafat gathering of 10,000 Muslims in Bombay. On Gandhi's appeal, 17 October was observed as the Khilafat Day with hartal, fast and prayers.

On 23 November the Bombay Khilafat Committee was redesignated the Central Khilafat Committee of India, and the very next day Gandhi was elected the president of the All-India Khilafat Conference in Delhi at a joint conference of the Hindus and Muslims. Not only the Khilafat question but also the cow protection issue was discussed here. Gandhi must have been happy to find that he would now get his volunteers not only from the Hindu community but also from among the Muslims. Gandhi asked both the Hindus and the Muslims to boycott the peace celebrations, but here he was not in favour of the proposal of the Khilafat party to boycott British goods, since he felt it would be a sign of weakness.¹¹⁰ It was resolved that the Muslims would withhold all co-operation from the British Government. This was confirmed by the Muslim League and other groups at a Calcutta meeting.

Initially, Motilal was in a fix as to whether a secular body like the Congress should join hands with a religious body like the Khilafat party, which was a part of the Pan-Islamic movement. He had no regard for Pan-Islamism or even Pan-Hinduism.¹¹¹

But by the time he presided over the Amritsar Congress in December 1919 Motilal had decided to follow Gandhi's plan. The Ali Brothers had just been released after four years of detention and on their way to

Amritsar to participate in the joint Congress and Muslim League meeting, they were given a grand ovation on the way. At Amritsar the leading Congress and Khilafat men discussed the situation created by the British Government's betrayal and a joint procession was taken out.

In his presidential address Motilal said that the Khilafat question was of supreme importance to Muslims and the Hindus alike.¹¹² He demanded that 'full effect be given to the assurances given to the Indian Muslims during the war.'¹¹³

The Congress protested against the hostile attitude of some British ministers towards the Turkish and Khilafat questions and asked the British Government to settle the Turkish question in accordance with the just and legitimate sentiments of the Indian Muslims and the solemn pledges of the British Prime Minister.

It was decided to organize the Khilafat movement under the leadership of Gandhi.¹¹⁴ Soon, even those who did not understand what the institution of Khilafat meant joined the movement, as they imagined that this Urdu word was derived from *khilaf*, meaning 'against' or 'opposed to' and hence it meant opposition to the government.¹¹⁵

The second phase of the Khilafat movement began in December when Gandhi became the supreme leader of the movement and the Congress gave him full support. It ended in May 1920. An official noted in early January 1920 that a 'tremendous amount of Pan-Islamic activity' was going on, radiating from Turkey.¹¹⁶ The curtailment of the temporal powers of the Caliph was considered by the Muslims as an attack on their religion.

The Khilafat agitation was a strange device for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity for a struggle against British rule. It was during this movement that the Congress flag was born, its colours symbolizing the various communities; saffron for the Hindus, green for the Muslims and white for the other minorities. The Khilafat leader Mohammad Ali often spoke on the unity of India as represented by the national flag.¹¹⁷

The Khilafat Conference, with 2,000 people attending, was held at Hyderabad on 4-5 January. It decided that the Muslims should adopt the swadeshi movement and threatened a *jihad* (holy war) against the British. Obviously the public reappearance of the Ali Brothers had added strength to the movement.¹¹⁸ They made fiery speeches on Pan-Islam at several places. The Sindh Provincial Khilafat Conference was particularly active in early 1920.

Around this time, Gandhi explained to the Hunter Committee at Ahmedabad the main features of his satyagraha and then came over to Delhi to meet Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Mohammad Ali and Hakim Ajmal Khan.

The Delhi meeting authorized a deputation including Gandhi to wait on the viceroy. On 19 January 1920 the Khilafat deputation told the viceroy that the Muslims shared the sorrows and sufferings of their brethren elsewhere. The viceroy told the deputation that the deliberations about the fate of Turkey were still going on in London and Paris. The deputation was obviously disappointed.

It was at Principal S.K. Rudra's place in Delhi that the programme of non-cooperation was conceived. Gandhi first spelled out the programme to Azad and a few others and then to the members of the Khilafat deputation.

From Delhi Gandhi and Azad went to Meerut where the Khilafat conference was being held and placed before it his non-cooperation programme. At the Khilafat conference held at Calcutta on 21 February Azad appealed to the Muslims to accept it.¹¹⁹

Gandhi stayed in Lahore in early February for, as a CID report said, he was fascinated by the 'credulous' Hindus and Muslims of the Punjab 'among whom his satyagraha movement will take root and flourish'.¹²⁰

From 15 to 17 February the third All-India Khilafat Conference was held in Bombay and on 26 February the All India Khilafat deputation went to London. The people were warned against violence of speech or deed and the irresponsible agitation begun in England in connection with the Khilafat question was condemned.

In March, Lloyd George's reply to the Khilafat deputation led by Mohammad Ali angered the Muslims. He said emphatically that Turkey could not be allowed to retain the lands which were not Turkish. This was an attack on the 'root of the Khilafat sentiment in India'.¹²¹

On 7 March Gandhi explained his ideas on the future course of action to be pursued by the Khilafatists, if their demands were rejected:

Non-cooperation is, therefore, the only remedy left to us. It is the clearest remedy, as it is the most effective, when it is free from all violence. It becomes a duty when co-operation means degradation or humiliation, or an injury to one's cherished religious sentiment. England cannot expect a meek submission by us to an unjust usurpation of right, which to Muslims means a matter of life and death.¹²²

In his manifesto of 4 March 1920¹²³ Gandhi made it clear that the Khilafat question overshadowed the constitutional reform and other matters. The Sultan of Turkey should control the holy places of Islam and enjoy suzerainty over Jazirat-ul-Arab (the Arabia peninsula). The Muslim soldiers, he said, could not have fought in the war to deprive Turkey of her possessions.

In early March two leaflets were issued: the first in Urdu said that all the Muslims who fought against Turkey were guilty of heinous sin because they helped in destroying the Caliphate and the brotherhood of Islam and in desecrating the holy places;¹²⁴ the second entitled 'Jehad, Jihad and Jihad' and signed by the president of the Jihad committee, asserted that the Muslim leaders had proclaimed a *jehad* against the *kafirs* (infidels) and that Enver Pasha, along with the Bolsheviks, was invading India. The Indian Muslims were urged to murder the British.

Around this time Gandhi and Mahadev Desai, the editor and publisher respectively of *Young India*,¹²⁵ had to face prosecution for referring in a peculiar way to some lawyers who had signed the satyagraha pledge. The accused did not defend themselves.

March 19 was observed as a day of national mourning, a day of prayers, fasting and general hartal. A week earlier Gandhi had advised the people holding offices of honour or emoluments or even those doing menial services to give up their jobs.

A telegram sent by Azad, Shaukat Ali and Mushir Hussain-Kidwai from Calcutta to M.M. Chotani of Bombay said that more than a lakh of people were prepared to participate in the All India protest on 19 March against the dismemberment of Turkey.¹²⁶

At the Khilafat Conference held on 24 March at Meerut Gandhi announced that it had been decided at an informal meeting in Delhi that both the Hindus and the Muslims should resign all civil, military and police offices and renounce all titles and other honorary distinctions and refuse to pay taxes and other government dues.¹²⁷

A week earlier, the four phases of the Non-cooperation Movement had been spelled out: (a) renunciation of honorary titles, etc.; (b) giving up of government posts; (c) giving up of appointments in the police and army; (d) refusal to pay taxes.

The third phase of the Khilafat movement lasted from mid-May to 1 August 1920 when it merged with the agitation over the Punjab issues to form a united movement of non-cooperation. During this phase, not many Congressmen had an implicit faith in *ahimsa*, let alone in truth. But those who had subscribed to Gandhi's scheme realized that it was his 'most original contribution to political thought'. In any event, they found Gandhi's guidance indispensable. But one thing is certain: they did not visualize the harm this unholy alliance between a fanatical religious group and a secular party could do.

4. Gandhi Comes to the Centre of the Stage

Undoubtedly by the middle of 1920 Gandhi had come to the centre of the stage. This was partly because of his charismatic personality and

messianic role¹²⁸ and partly due to the political situation of India at that time. The people had lost faith in the style of functioning of the Congress leadership. Neither, the 'political mendicancy' of the Moderates nor the Extremism of Tilak, Annie Besant and others seemed to cut much ice.

The people at large had come to look on Gandhi as 'the national saint and hero who would remove the burden of wrongs under which they . . . had been suffering.'¹²⁹ And now he was the leader not only of the Hindus but also of the Muslims. According to a government report he occupied 'a unique position as the leader of the two sections of the Indian population most opposed to the British Indian Government and the British connection.'¹³⁰ As a member of the Central Khilafat Committee he dominated the councils of the Muslim extremists and as the president of Tilak's Home Rule League he was respected even by Congressmen of radical views. Indeed, he had made himself a vital link between the two communities and the Muslims were even willing to give up ritual cow slaughter.

A speaker at a meeting at Multan compared the advent of Gandhi on the political stage of India to the advent of Moses, the coming of Jesus Christ, of Muhammad and Krishna.¹³¹ The invocation of his name had become a habit throughout the hartal period, his portrait headed the processions, and the protest meetings resounded with *Gandhiji ki jai!* (Victory to Gandhi).

The Constitution of the Congress at that time was the legacy of G.K. Gokhale who had framed a few rules for the running of the Congress machinery.¹³² There was no organization to look after the work of the Congress between sessions or to deal with contingent and unforeseen events. In theory, there were three secretaries but, in fact, only one worked, single-handed, from the end of one session to the start of the other. Besides, the Congress was 'too unwieldy a body for the discussion of public affairs'.¹³³ A province could send any number of delegates, and the annual Congress session often became a rather disorganized event.

Since Gandhi had become a very important member of the Congress he was asked in the Amritsar Congress in December 1919 to frame a new constitution for the body. He associated the other two most influential leaders, Tilak and C.R. Das. with this task, but they nominated Kelkar and I.B. Sen to assist Gandhi, which they did through correspondence. So, in effect, the new constitution was the work of Gandhi alone.

It is interesting to note that in April 1919 the AICC admitted that it had 'no authority to discuss' the merits of the passive resistance movement led by Gandhi.¹³⁴ All the same, it noted that nothing but a feeling of

'high-souled patriotism and intense realization of injustice' could have actuated a 'man of his saintly character and noble record' to take up this movement. Obviously the people became violent only when the government put restrictions on Gandhi's movements.

Later, on 8 June 1919, the AICC urged the government to rescind the orders passed under the Defence of India Act forbidding Gandhi's entry into the Punjab and Delhi.¹³⁵

Thus, even though Gandhi was not yet the topmost leader in 1919, this 'frail, gentle ascetic politician' had arrived on the political stage of India as an influential leader — at a time when there was widespread frustration in the country. To the people's amazement, he challenged government decisions, policies or institutions which 'flouted religiously sanctioned social mores, beliefs or ideals or injured the pride and self-respect' of groups or of the Indians as a whole.¹³⁶

As a matter of fact, the Extremists (Nationalists) had become stronger than the Moderates in the Congress when it met at Amritsar, where 7,031 delegates attended.¹³⁷ As Shraddhanand commented, so far the main work of the Congress had been the passing of resolutions on Indian grievances; no effort was made 'to develop the capability of the people'. Now Gandhi was ready to take up this work.

In the middle of October 1919 the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had suggested that the assignment of seats in the Subjects Committee per division of a presidency should be proportionate to the number of delegates present from that division.

The C.P. Provincial Congress Committee proposed that a small body of 60 should be carved out of the All-India Congress Committee to act as the Executive of the National Congress. The AICC should be amplified for the purpose of acting as the Subjects Committee of the Congress by the addition of an equal number of representatives elected by the various provincial Congress Committees.

The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee suggested that it should be open to the AICC in extraordinary circumstances, to suspend a session of the Congress.

All these suggestions were helpful to Gandhi in preparing the draft constitution. A. Rangaswami Iyengar, the editor of the *Swadesamitran*,¹³⁸ thought that any proposal to limit the number of delegates to the Congress in the manner proposed in Gandhi's draft was inopportune at the moment. Indeed, Iyengar wanted to maintain the Congress as the 'Grand Inquest of the Nation'. Thousands of delegates, he pointed out, not only represented the views of the people but also carried forward into the interior of the country all the national impulses of which the Congress was the embodiment.¹³⁹ Opposing the cutting down of the

number of delegates he wondered whether Gandhi thought that the Congress had become 'less wise and less representative by reason of the increase in the number of our countrymen who are attending its session'.

The Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920 adopted the new constitution drafted by Gandhi. This confirmed his supreme leadership after a period of crisis from August to December 1920. Jawaharlal Nehru says that, with the special session at Calcutta in 1920, began the Gandhi era in Congress politics.¹⁴⁰ From here the very course of Congress politics changed and a new style of functioning was adopted.

The strength of the support for Gandhi, Judith Brown thinks, emanated from a combination of local influence, his personal reputation, the caste structure of different areas and the attitude of local leaders.¹⁴¹ In the way he had won over the Muslims, he converted the Sikh League to his cause in October 1920.

From December 1920 the Congress had at the top a new compact body called the Congress Working Committee, a creation of Gandhi. Soon it became 'the most powerful body not only in the Congress organization but in the whole of Indian political life'. The AICC was reorganized on the basis of population with 300 members and the provincial committees were constituted on a linguistic basis.¹⁴²

With such a pyramid and with mediating leaders and volunteers spread all over the country Gandhi continued his struggle against the British Raj. His Non-cooperation Movement was an instrument for bringing the bureaucracy down on its knees by paralysing its administration.¹⁴³

The government authorities wondered how, in spite of his sad experience of the Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi was suggesting the same solution in the case of the Khilafat problem. Perhaps the association of Gandhi with any movement was 'a great asset for his name was one to conjure with among the ignorant masses'. No wonder Shaukat Ali and his followers called him their guru and followed his advice.

Gandhi proposed a minimum programme which might be acceptable to the Pan-Islamists: non-cooperation, boycott and swadeshi, including the non-payment of taxes and winning over government servants to the nationalist cause.

As among the Hindus, so among the Muslims there were detractors of Mahatma Gandhi. Badruddin Abdulla Koor, for example, resigned in protest against the Non-cooperation Movement.¹⁴⁴ He thought that the Muslim temperament, charged at the moment with religious excitement and fervour, would not shun violence and bloodshed while taking part in the movement. Presumably 'an intellectual' like Gandhi, said Koor,

might control his passions but 'a large and unwieldy community of uneducated and highly sensitive people goaded to disappointment and despair by the apathy of Great Britain and its Allies on the Khilafat question could never do so.' Therefore, Koor feared, non-cooperation would submerge India into chaos and confusion and 'the substantial work hitherto done by the Khilafat committee on constitutional lines will all be undone.'¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, the amity and understanding between Gandhi and M.M. Chotani was not liked by the authorities. They were taken in by the rumour that Afghanistan would provoke a crisis in India.¹⁴⁶ Hijrat¹⁴⁷ committees were formed all over the Punjab and canvassing for them went on in the villages.

The UP governor reported to the governor-general late in May that the Extremists were trying to cement the *entente* over the Khilafat question and would hold a big meeting on 1 June. But he felt that the Muslims would not give up their appointments or professional practice as advised by Gandhi and his associates.¹⁴⁸

The AICC in a meeting at Banaras on 30 and 31 May was of the view that the peace terms offered to Turkey were in flagrant violation of the solemn pledges of the British Government. It resented the holy places of Islam being placed under the control of Christians and urged a revision of the Turkish treaty.

Gandhi convened an all-parties conference at Allahabad on 2 June and a committee was appointed with Gandhi and some leading Muslims to draw up a programme which was eventually published. The boycott of schools and colleges and the law courts figured prominently in it.¹⁴⁹

In view of the incensed public opinion on the question of Khilafat, the AICC decided to hold a special Congress at Calcutta not later than 15 September 1920 to consider the adoption of a policy of non-cooperation or any other suitable course of action. Meanwhile, the provincial Congress committees were asked to submit their views on the principles and programme of non-cooperation so that these could be taken up at the special Congress.

The Non-cooperation sub-committee of the Khilafat committee issued in July a manifesto outlining the programme of demonstrations for 1 August — a complete hartal and public meeting in every village. But there would be no procession and no shop would be forced to close. However, the people were to be persuaded to surrender their titles and honorary posts and to withdraw their wards from government schools. Lawyers were to suspend their practice and full swadeshi was to be inaugurated.¹⁵⁰

By July 1920 reports from Bengal, Bombay and Sind indicated a lull in the political situation. The government naturally felt that Non-cooperation was 'proving a difficult morsel to swallow' and 'personal ambitions strong enough among the so-called leaders'.¹⁵¹ The authorities were glad the Lajpat Rai's 'startling proposal' for boycotting the councils under the Montford Reforms had for the time being been shelved. However, they were apprehensive about the results of M.A. Jinnah consulting the Bengal leaders concerning the boycott of the reception committee for the Indian visit of the Prince of Wales, as well as about the propaganda and verbal attacks of the Al-Wahid of Karachi against the Muslims loyal to the Raj. So were they worried about the visit of three important Sind agitators to Afghanistan to arouse anti-British feelings.

The *Bengalee* of S.N. Banerjea in Calcutta, representing the Moderate view, noted on 7 July 1920 that at the recent Bombay meeting of the Extremists or at a Muslim meeting at Barisal, a centre of Muslim opinion in Bengal, non-cooperation was not even mentioned. It imagined that Gandhi and Lajpat Rai were now the sole sponsors of this 'discredited movement'. Even the Extremists of Bengal were said to be lukewarm towards it. On the Congress forum they supported the Khilafat movement, but in practice they repudiated it when convenient.

Even H.S. Polak, a former close associate of Gandhi in South Africa, did not like his friend taking up the Khilafat issue: 'He is showing himself to be a very dangerous, plausible and ill-informed fanatic on this question.'¹⁵² Polak alleged that 'Gandhi was dragging India into serious difficulties, adversely affecting the welfare of many Indians'. Besides, Gandhi's 'useful public work' was also suffering. Polak even thought that Gandhi's ill-health was responsible for his 'mental attitude' for 'if Mohammad Ali's interpretation of Islam be correct, . . . Islam is a world danger to be fought remorselessly by all other peoples.'¹⁵³

For while Khilafat agitation was in the doldrums, meetings were held once in a while to propagate swadeshi and get subscriptions for the Khilafat fund. Some youngsters even moved about collecting donations for the cause. Doubts were expressed about sincere Hindu support.

Soon, however, the Khilafat committee formed in Delhi was able to persuade 20,000 people to take the swadeshi vow, besides getting half a dozen swadeshi stores started.¹⁵⁴ Many Muslims took the Khilafat agitation rather lightly¹⁵⁵ and felt that it was gradually undermining respect for authority.

Towards the end of July, however, non-cooperation and the hartal on 1 August received greater attention in Bengal, Bihar and Bombay. The waverers were persuaded to change their attitude. Large number of Hindus and Muslims signed the pledge not to use foreign goods.

The government hoped that Gandhi's plan of Non-cooperation would not be endorsed by the Special Congress at Calcutta. A government report ¹⁵⁶ said that Gandhi's ultimate object was 'to shatter the prestige of government to pieces, and to bring about the collapse of the machinery of law and order all over the country'. And since the Congress was the only viable organization, representing the educated elites in India who knew the nuances of politics, it could take over the reins of government from the British.

An English newspaper wondered how the Muslim League, which had been formed 'to prevent Hindu encroachments on Muslim rights and privileges', and could not see eye to eye with the Hindus, had now aligned with the Congress. It alleged that the Hindu politicians joined the Muslims in stirring up 'the ignorant Moslem with a cry of religion in danger'. ¹⁵⁷ This pro-British newspaper alleged that Gandhi's 'conceit' had 'clouded his judgement' and visualized a split in the Congress ranks because the Hindus were not willing to be governed by the Muslims. ¹⁵⁸ Referring to the difficulty in selecting the venue of the Special Congress it thought that the Congress leaders themselves were 'wavering and undecided'. ¹⁵⁹

Nayak, ¹⁶⁰ an Indian newspaper, also opposed the Non-cooperation Movement because it would upset the Montford reforms. Perhaps it reflected the anxiety of the central government which asked the local governments to furnish full reports on the extent of the hartal on 1 August. ¹⁶¹

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, ¹⁶² the nationalist paper of Calcutta, however, sympathized with the Indian Muslims on the Turkish question: 'The coming hartal is nothing but a protest against the injustice that is going to be done to Turkey.' The entire Hindu community, it felt, was 'in absolute sympathy with them in the calamity which has befallen them and we hope and trust that Sunday next will be a day when the natural [national] sentiments and feelings of the people, Hindu and Musalman, will find expression in abstention from work as much as possible and in prayer and in fasting.'

On 1 August, a general all-India hartal was observed under the overall leadership of Gandhi. The general dissatisfaction with the prejudiced Hunter Report and the Muslim discontent over the peace terms offered to Turkey led to a spontaneous response to this non-violent act of Non-cooperation.

On the hartal day Gandhi returned his medals 'in pursuance of the scheme of non-cooperation' inaugurated that day in connection with the Khilafat movement. He wrote to the viceroy that he could not wear these 'with an easy conscience so long as my Musalman countrymen

have to labour under a wrong done to their religious sentiment'.¹⁶³ He was convinced during 'the past month' that 'the Imperial Government have acted in the Khilafat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their morality.'¹⁶⁴

*The Englishman*¹⁶⁵ reported that some people observed the hartal in Calcutta but a large majority remained at home. In the morning, there were no crowds and processions, but later, when the people learnt of Tilak's death, a large number of people gathered and a very big procession was formed. Even so, the gathering in the town hall was poor and the Non-cooperation Movement seemed to have ended in a fiasco.¹⁶⁶

The *Bengalee* even thought that the initial enthusiasm for the Non-cooperation Movement was subsiding. Gandhi, it said, should have realized that his movement was weakening.¹⁶⁷ However, this Moderate paper feared that the scenario might change at the Special Congress session, for the voting would not go 'according to the numerical strength of the delegates but from province to province.'¹⁶⁸ Even so, it consoled its readers that the older provinces like Bengal and Bombay were opposed to the movement which was 'fraught with mischief'.¹⁶⁹

In the Punjab the hartal was widespread: Lahore, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Multan, Sargodhha and Pathankot were the most affected.¹⁷⁰ Public meetings passed resolutions and prayers were offered on behalf of Turkey.

In Madras, certainly an 'old province', almost all shops were closed. On the Marina beach about 10,000 people assembled, approximately one half of them being Hindus. The Turkish flag was hoisted and a resolution was passed in favour of the Non-cooperation Movement.¹⁷¹ In the rural areas, however, the hartal was not so successful.

Similarly, in the Bombay Presidency, the urban areas had more success than the rural areas. In the city of Bombay an assemblage of 4,000 people passed a resolution supporting non-cooperation. There was a partial hartal in Sholapur. The central and southern divisions did not show much enthusiasm. At Karachi, some youths tried to close two cinema halls and in the clash some property was destroyed. Besides, a few carters were assaulted for plying. In the Ahmedabad and Kheda districts in Gujarat, the hartal was complete and in Sind, Hyderabad was the main storm centre of the movement.¹⁷²

In UP partial hartal was observed in most district towns and in the bigger towns meetings were well attended. In Bihar and Orissa, the hartal in the important towns like Patna was fairly successful. Shops closed all day in Daltonganj and partially in Monghyr, Gaya, Chapra, Bhagalpur and Ranchi. About 1,000 people attended the public meeting

at Patna and 500 at Gaya. A couple of Muslims at Phulwari Sharif renounced their titles.¹⁷³

According to a Muslim newspaper¹⁷⁴ the renunciation of titles and honorary offices was not as plentiful 'as it ought to have been and as the necessity of the situation demands', but the beginning was not bad. In Delhi Asaf Ali decided to suspend legal practice. Sheriff Deviji Kangaji resigned his seat in the Bombay Legislative Council. Sarladevi Chaudharani, a prominent figure of Bengal, gave up the brooch which she had been awarded in recognition of services rendered in the formation of the Bengal Regiment.

In August 1920, C. Rajagopalachari resigned his seat on the Labour Advisory Board. This was followed by many resignations of public servants under the non-cooperation programme.

A Muslim newspaper said Gandhi was the high priest of the movement. Indeed, after Tilak's death he was the topmost leader of the nationalist movement. A Muslim newspaper said: 'Most of our people, Hindu and Mussalman, have been waiting for the decision of the Congress and the Muslim League.'¹⁷⁵ A Muslim newspaper in Calcutta¹⁷⁶ asked the Muslims to bear 'trouble, grief and . . . defeat your enemies by the sword of non-cooperation, as your sacred religious duty and look to it as the national beacon' to preserve the integrity of the Khilafat.

The viceroy told the Imperial Legislative Council around this time that though his government had conveyed the views of the Indian Muslims to the Home Government, he had still to face the Non-cooperation Movement which might lead to a grave disorder. He could not understand how a lawyer could forgo his practice, for he himself belonged to the legal profession. He did hope that the common sense of the people and the opposition of all moderate men would 'erect an insuperable bar to the further progress of this most foolish of all foolish schemes'.¹⁷⁷

A few Congress leaders like K.V. Rangaswamy Iyyanger and G.S. Khaparde were still opposed to the non-cooperation movement. But this did not worry Gandhi. Indeed, he felt that the viceroy's last speech against non-cooperation would make it a popular movement.¹⁷⁸

Early in September, Polak once again wrote to Andrews that Gandhi had made 'a fearful mistake'¹⁷⁹ over the Khilafat movement and his Non-cooperation Movement would do 'infinite harm if in any way it be successful'. Another critic of Gandhi in the Congress, Khaparde, criticized Gandhi's stand in the Congress Subjects Committee where Gandhi once claimed that he was not bound by the majority of the Congress and claimed to be 'the chief adviser of the Congress'.¹⁸⁰

The UP Governor was sore over some political agitators stirring up the 'ignorant and disaffected people by spreading false rumours as to the

violation of the sacred place, etc.'¹⁸¹ He wondered why the agitators were 'noisy, insistent and provocative' while the loyalists were 'shy and reluctant to come forward'.

By September practically every party was keeping its fingers crossed. All eyes were set on the Special Congress to be held at Calcutta. A million dollar question was: Will the Congress agree to Gandhi's proposal?

5. The Congress Adopts the Programme of Non-cooperation (Calcutta and Nagpur sessions)

The special session of the Congress was held in September 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai. Congress and Khilafat special trains were run to Calcutta from Bombay¹⁸² and there was a vast gathering of delegates and spectators eager to hear the decision on the vital issue.

Gandhi very carefully drafted his resolution for this eventful Congress. He was not sure who would support and who would oppose him. He accepted Motilal's suggestion and included the demand for swaraj in his resolution. After a lively discussion, the resolution was passed and Motilal joined the movement. C.R. Das was still sceptical, and Lajpat Rai still opposed to it.

The Congress had received several suggestions from different parts of the country, at least two of which seem noteworthy. One Haridas Haldar of Bengal pointed out that if some Congressmen drew up a new programme of non-cooperation as separate from that of the Khilafat, this would create a rift in the organization.¹⁸³ Since Gandhi had long experience in the field and the country had implicit faith in him, the Congress should lend full support to the campaign he had already launched and 'allow the veteran pilot a free hand in steering the movement clear of all rocks ahead. . . .'

Another was from Bhagwan Das, the great philosopher of Banaras. He said that some people found non-cooperation constitutional while others deemed it unconstitutional. 'Mere speeches and writings and petitions and memorials, adroitly avoiding the meshes of the penal laws, and unaccompanied by definite action of an appropriate kind, have never achieved and never will achieve any political or other progress.' He thought that the non-cooperation of Gandhi corresponded with the strike and the boycott of the trade unions. Das wanted the Congress to build a cadre of dedicated and disciplined men. He appreciated the renouncing of titles by Subramania Iyer of Madras as well as by Tagore. He favoured swadeshi and favoured the organization of arbitration tribunals. He was also in favour of the establishment of non-official schools, colleges and universities.

It is difficult to say how far this Congress was influenced by such views, but these certainly weighed in favour of Gandhi's leadership.

The Congress noted that the government had 'signally failed in their duty towards the Muslims in India'.¹⁸⁴ To vindicate the national honour and to prevent the recurrence of wrongs as in the Punjab and with regard to Khilafat it wanted swaraj and adopted the policy of progressive non-violent non-cooperation initiated by Gandhi.

The Congress asked the people to surrender titles and honorary offices and resign from the nominated seats in the local bodies. It advised them to boycott the government's official and non-official functions and to withdraw their children from government schools and colleges. They were asked to establish national schools and colleges in the provinces. Lawyers and litigants were to boycott the courts and set up private arbitration courts for resolving private disputes. The military, clerical and labouring classes were urged to refuse to serve in Mesopotamia. The candidates for the election to the Reformed Councils should withdraw their candidature and the voters should refuse to vote. Besides, there should be a boycott of foreign goods.

The Congress accepted non-cooperation as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice for the progress of the nation. It advised the adoption of swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale in the first stage of non-cooperation. Since the Indian mills were not able to cope with the full demands of the people, it advised every weaver to revive hand-spinning and hand-weaving as a cottage industry.¹⁸⁵

Unlike in the case of the earlier Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi was now able to organize a mass movement of political protest. The new departure was 'the complete antithesis of the limited politics of the Congress and older Muslim League leaders'.¹⁸⁶ Now, wider sections of the Indian population participated in Congress politics. True, the Rowlatt Satyagraha had enhanced Gandhi's position in the Congress, but the leadership of the Khilafat agitation got him real power among the Hindu as well as the Muslim politicians.¹⁸⁷

One of the main reasons for Gandhi securing a majority in the Special Congress was good tactics. In a Subjects Committee all the Muslim members except Jinnah voted with Gandhi, while many important non-Muslim nationalists supported C.R. Das who opposed Gandhi's scheme. But, ultimately, Gandhi's charismatic personality carried the day and the programme of triple boycott was accepted.

Since Gandhi's supporters dominated the Subjects Committee and leaders like Motilal gradually moved towards him, Gandhi's resolution on non-cooperation did not fall. Moreover, successful businessmen had been with Gandhi. After all, the boycott of foreign goods helped many

of them. The Marwaris of Calcutta gave Gandhi solid support at the Special Session. Gandhi's victory, however, was also due to his alliance with the Muslims on the Khilafat issue. Also, areas like the United Provinces, Bihar and Punjab, which were so far deemed backward in national political awareness and in Congress politics, contributed a great deal to Gandhi's success.¹⁸⁸

Thus a grim but non-violent struggle began for preserving an out-of-date institution, the Caliphate, which had so far been a hindrance to the growth of Arab nationalism.¹⁸⁹ It is noteworthy that soon after this session Gandhi had to undertake a fast for 21 days as a protest against serious communal riots.

Under the existing rules, the resolution of the Special Congress had to be ratified at the regular session at Nagpur in December 1920. Meanwhile the struggle went on. In October, Mazharul Haq, a Bihar leader, declared that non-cooperation was 'not purely a political movement but a spiritual one'. It was 'sure to rouse the manhood of India and free it from the bondage of occidental domination'.¹⁹⁰ He asked the people to register their names in the volunteer corps which had become an important auxiliary of the Congress.

A critic of Gandhi, however, thought that this movement was failing and that Gandhi 'while trying to paralyse the administration, paralysed himself and his movement by estranging the sympathy of a very large number of parents by making the withdrawal of children from schools an integral part of his non-cooperation programme.'¹⁹¹

In response to the AICC's invitation for public criticism of the programme of non-cooperation, Birendra Prasad, a pleader of Howrah and a member of the Bengal Congress Committee, submitted a detailed note on 29 September 1920. He wanted the propaganda machinery to be more comprehensive including non-political associations also. 'Trained, cool-headed, robust-minded, educated', non-cooperators were to be associated. Leaflets in the local languages were to be issued and processions with patriotic songs to be organized. The theatre, *yatra* (*jatra*) parties, sports and other organizations were to preach non-cooperation. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving were to be popularized.

Another set of suggestions from one Gouri Shankar of the Ajmer-Merwara Congress Committee¹⁹² wanted a national university with powers of affiliating national schools and colleges. The Banares Hindu University and the Aligarh Muslim University could take a lead in this direction.

Another set came from Kurla,¹⁹³ pointing out that by organizing national schools, arbitration courts, etc., under the Non-cooperation Movement the Congress was to take on a part of the governmental

functions. But the government resolution of 6 November called upon the people to reject this 'visionary and chimerical' movement which could result in widespread disorder.

At the Nagpur Congress session in December 1920 there was a huge rush of visitors and delegates because the resolution on non-cooperation passed at the Special Session had to be confirmed. In all, 14,582 delegates came. Resolution No. 2 passed at Calcutta was passed once again after a couple of changes, accepted at the instance of Lajpat Rai and C.R. Das. This time an overwhelming majority supported the non-violent progressive non-cooperation with the government for redressal of the Khilafat grievances and the Punjab wrongs and for securing swaraj.¹⁹⁴

According to Durga Das, this Congress 'turned its back on constitutional methods of agitation and handed over the reins of the freedom struggle to Gandhi'. The president of the session, Vijayaraghavacharya, 'pleaded in vain for a conciliatory gesture to strengthen [the Secretary of State] Montagu's hands'.¹⁹⁵ Jinnah warned that independence could be secured only with bloodshed. But Gandhi remained adamant and C.R. Das and others supported him. Gandhi's hands were further strengthened by the adoption of the constitution of the Congress drafted by him as well as by the appointment of Motilal, M.A. Ansari and Rajagopalachari as the general secretaries of the Congress.¹⁹⁶

The new Congress constitution created a mass base with a small Working Committee at the apex of the pyramid. The Congress was no longer 'a shambling federation of local groups who met annually'.¹⁹⁷ All the same, it retained its structural 'amorphousness'.¹⁹⁸

At the Nagpur Congress, the second phase of non-cooperation — boycott of government jobs, courts and educational institutions — began. Besides, Hindu-Muslim unity and Brahmin-non-Brahmin amity were to be achieved. Only then could swaraj be achieved within a year.

Gandhi and the Ali brothers toured the country and bonfires of foreign clothes became common.¹⁹⁹ Students and teachers began to withdraw from the government or government-aided institutions. Many members of the local boards and committees and municipalities resigned and medals and titles were returned.²⁰⁰ Many Muslim lawyers of Bengal, especially of Burdwan and Birbhum, suspended their practice, worked for the Khilafat movement and withdrew their children from educational institutions.²⁰¹

A committee of experts nominated by the AICC formulated a scheme of foreign trade relations and encouraged hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Every Indian was required to make 'the utmost possible contribution of self-sacrifice to the national movement'.

To accelerate the progress of Non-cooperation, committees were orga-

nized to each village or groups of villages affiliated to a provincial central organization. According to the direction of Nagpur Congress, an Indian National Service programme was organized with a band of national workers and this as well as the Non-cooperation Movement was financed by the All-India Tilak Memorial Swarajya Fund.

The Nagpur Congress congratulated the nation on the progress so far made in executing the programme of non-cooperation, specially with regard to the boycott of the councils by the voters. It urged upon those who got themselves elected by a truncated suffrage to quit.

The Congress hoped that the Indian police would put their creed and country above routine duty and behave well towards the people. It also asked the government servants to help the national cause.

The president of the Nagpur Congress referred to the 'draconian' Rowlatt Law, the terrible Punjab tragedy, the agony of the Punjab, the Khilafat fraud, and other grievances.²⁰² The Congress wanted the Indian labour to be organized to prevent its exploitation.²⁰³

The Indian Trade Union Congress was sympathetic to the Non-cooperation Movement. At its meeting at Jharia (Bihar) in November 1921 the pandal was decorated with khadi caps.

6. Implementation of the Programme for Non-cooperation

The response to the Congress call for non-cooperation and boycott was phenomenal. Titles were surrendered, students withdrew from their schools and colleges and lawyers left their practice. Never before was the country 'so awakened, so active, so united and so determined' as during the 1921 non-cooperation programme.²⁰⁴

There were three distinct stages in the evolution of this movement. First, there was a widespread student unrest and the establishment of the Kashi and Gujarat Vidyapeeth and other national schools and colleges. Then came the Congress Tilak-Swaraj Fund collection which, by early July 1921, amounted to a crore of rupees. In the third phase came the *charkha* (spinning wheel) and *khaddar* or *khadi* (handmade cloth) movement during the latter months of 1921 — aimed at providing work to the poor.

During the Non-cooperation early in 1921 Gandhi referred to the callousness of the government concerning local grievances, for example, the famine in Orissa.²⁰⁵ No wonder he called the government *papi* (sinful).

During the Orissa tour Gandhi asked the students to boycott their educational institutions. When a student asked Gandhi in a meeting what he should do after leaving school, he was advised to devote seven hours a day to the spinning wheel and one hour to literature. Gandhi

reminded them that Adi Shankaracharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu achieved greatness without getting English education.

At Satyabadi (Puri) Gandhi asked the audience to boycott the government courts and to get their disputes settled in the panchayats.²⁰⁶ The British legal system, he said, was corrupt.

Gandhi advised the Indian weavers to use only yarn made in India and for that it was necessary to introduce the spinning wheel and weaving — both *charkha* and *kargha* — into every home. Every woman was to devote three or four hours a day to such work.²⁰⁷

Gandhi wanted the Indians to get rid of all foreign cloth by September 1921 so that swaraj could come by the year end. Some cloth dealers, as in Monghyr and Bhagalpur, did assure him that they would not deal in foreign cloth in future and they were advised to clear existing stocks even at a loss.²⁰⁸

Gandhi made it clear that the struggle was not against the English people but against *adharma* and the present government which was dominated by a *shaitaniat* (evil spirit).²⁰⁹

On C.R. Das's appeal, about 3,000 college students went on a strike in early 1921 in Calcutta alone.²¹⁰ The AICC register of non-cooperators shows that many government jobs were given up. During his Bihar tour, Gandhi asked those who lived in luxury to take to handlooms. If there was a strike in the Bihar coalfields or there was a rise in the wages of the miners, all these were ascribed to 'Gandhi Maharaja's grace'.²¹¹ If in a meeting he asked people to discard their foreign caps, they immediately did so.

The first major Marxist critique of Gandhi and his movement appeared in M.N. Roy's *India in Transition* (Moscow, 1921). Among Congressmen, while Motilal accepted non-violence as a necessity, his son would not initially accept it as a principle, even though its elevating and exhilarating qualities were well-known. In fact the opponents of Gandhi thought it wise to adjust to the new situation, otherwise they would lose political influence in the Congress.²¹²

Jawaharlal wanted to link the peasant discontent with Congress politics, 'harnessing peasant strength in the interests of the Congress'.²¹³ Throughout the winter of 1920-1 he had tried to tag the peasant power to the Non-cooperation Movement.

Sadhus, sanyasis and fakirs also came to be associated with the Non-cooperation Movement in a big way. In early 1921 Ram Krishna Bhatta, an employee of the Tata Iron & Steel Co. at Jamshedpur revealed that the most powerful sadhus, the nagas, more than a hundred in number, had attended the Nagpur Congress and had formed a Sadhu Sangh affiliated to the Congress to undertake the work of non-cooperation

propaganda.²¹⁴ They were supposed to hold a meeting during the *Magh Mela* (an important religious fair around January) at Allahabad and also at Ayodhya and Ujjain.

Swami Bhaskar Tirth was active among the kisans (peasants) of UP, while Swami Vidyanand was the leader of the kisans in North Bihar.²¹⁵ Gandhi was said to have thanked the sanyasis for their support to the movement and advised them to influence the sepoys in the British Indian army to quit.

According to a government report²¹⁶ political emissaries were sent by Egypt, Afghanistan or Soviet Russia, disguised as sadhus or fakirs. Such persons were also said to be moving about the country, fomenting discontent and antagonism against the government, especially in Bengal, Bihar, Assam and UP. A report from Bihar said that soon after the Nagpur Congress the non-cooperation leaders wanted to employ sadhus and fakirs for preaching non-cooperation.

In Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Sikkim, Kharagpur and other areas sadhus were quite active. Sadhu Kumaranand of Calcutta in the course of his lectures in CP reminded the people of the freedom struggle of 1857, the Alipur Bomb case of 1907-8, the Nihilist Secret Society of Russia, and so on.

In Bengal, Swami Vishwanand (real name Rasal Singh) was active in the colliery areas. In Assam, Surja Das was preaching non-cooperation in the Garo Hills.²¹⁷ One of the main centres of the sadhu movement was Haridwar (UP).²¹⁸ Sadhu Ram Raksha was in touch with the famous revolutionary, Raja Mahendra Pratap. The Gurukul Kangri of Haridwar, the Arya Samaj centres in UP and the Brahmacharya Vidyalaya of Ranchi (Bihar) seemed to be the training ground for sadhu volunteers.

Swami Dharmanand was on the surface an Arya Samajist of Madras, but in reality one of Gandhi's political sanyasis who had attended the Nagpur Congress. Formerly a military surgeon, he was now determined to continue non-cooperation in South India, irrespective of what Gandhi did.²¹⁹

Paras Ram Brahmachari of the Kangra district (Punjab) was a volunteer on the Malabar coast on behalf of the Madras Congress Committee.²²⁰ Jalaluddin of Hazara (North-West Frontier Province), Keval Ram, a Sikh sadhu of Amritsar and Bishambhar Das Guru were working in Northern India, while Shuddhanand Pandey, Siaram Das and Debendranath Roy were active in Assam and the adjoining areas.

Obviously these sadhus and fakirs were very effective carriers of the principles of the Non-cooperation Movement as they gave the call 'a religious tinge' which appealed to the people.²²¹ No wonder every

religious institution in the Ganga valley, from Haridwar downwards, was full of non-cooperators.

The agrarian risings in Awadh (UP) and Bihar were frequently led by sadhus and the All-India Sadhu Sabha and the All-India Hindu Sabha played a significant role in the Non-cooperation Movement.²²² This was paralleled by the role of the maulvis and other fundamentalists in the Khilafat movement as well as in the Non-cooperation Movement.²²³ Perhaps religion had become a part of politics during this period.

Presumably Gandhi wanted such a milieu. To allay the fears of the Hindus he told them that cows were usually slaughtered for the Europeans in the coalfields of Jharia and elsewhere, not so much for the Muslims.²²⁴ The Muslims sacrificed cows on religious grounds, not so the Europeans, he said. If the Hindus could not save the Khalifa, he noted, they could not talk of cow protection.

Gandhi asked the people to subscribe liberally to the Tilak Swaraj Fund and give up bad habits, live unitedly, regarding even the sweepers as their brethren. Only then could they attain swaraj, save the Khalifa and obtain justice for the Punjab atrocities.

Gandhi required his followers to work hard and sacrifice as much as they could. But his followers often ignored the pre-conditions for non-cooperation. When Gandhi came to inaugurate the Bihar National College at Patna in early 1921, a police report said that all the Biharis were with the Mahatma and if he 'jumped into the fire they would follow him'.²²⁵

Even the tribals in the remote areas of Bihar were stirred by Gandhi and his movement. The Mundas and the Oraons and the Santhals got into it because of the persuasions of Swami Vidyanand. The Bihar government panicked: 'If the aboriginals are stirred up, we shall have a new source of trouble on our hands.'²²⁶

By the middle of 1921 the Government of India felt alarmed at the utterances of Ali brothers on the possibility of an Afghan invasion.²²⁷ But they were happy that Gandhi appeared 'less sanguine of success and more inclined to direct attention to the social side of the movement than political agitation'.²²⁸ They were also elated at B.C. Pal parting company with Gandhi who was himself changing his stance, advising the Bihar leaders to be moderate in speech and action.²²⁹

But the government officers were in fact living in a fool's paradise. The movement was gaining momentum: the excise liquor shops were forcibly closed; many municipal lamps were smashed; court orders were disobeyed; and the picketing of the courts continued. The no-tax campaign was in full swing.

The volunteer corps was now a strong subsidiary and the four-anna

membership of the Congress had led to a great increase in enrolment.²³⁰ Many police and army men in Bihar and Orissa resigned in response to Gandhi's call.²³¹

The kisans were also very active in the movement but, as Walter Hauser points out, even though the kisan movement received an impetus from non-cooperation, it was 'inferior to and independent of it', because the main focus of the former was on the boycott of the courts, educational institutions, foreign clothes and liquor.²³²

In July 1921 the AICC asked the people to refrain from welcoming the Prince of Wales and also to concentrate on the foreign cloth boycott and anti-liquor campaign. Of the many bonfires of foreign cloth, one in Bombay was significant because Gandhi himself applied the match.²³³

The Moplah rebellion in Malabar in August 1921 came as a rude shock to the protagonists of the Non-cooperation Movement although it was only one of the 40 cases of violent unrest in the country.²³⁴ The Moplahs (Mopillas), the descendants of Arab immigrants, were 'inflamed' by the speeches of the leaders of the Non-cooperation Movement. They were angry at the insult of their priests and broke into violence.

The Moplahs were devout Muslims, facing certain agrarian problems. However, in their religious frenzy they killed many Hindus and Europeans and even declared their own king. Forcible conversion, outrages on women, pillage and arson continued before troops came in and killed some 600 rebels. Thus the measures taken to suppress this rising were as harsh as the 'barbarous deeds of the Moplahs'.²³⁵

Initially, Gandhi praised the Moplahs for their bravery, but later he condemned them. As A.R. Desai says,²³⁶ 'this uprising had both communal and economic roots. But it also proved how fragile the Hindu-Muslim unity was.' Indeed, occasional cracks had developed in this unity even during the Khilafat movement and now it was clear that the pan-Islamic movement was turning into an anti-Hindu passion. In fact, the *ulema* (divines) who supported the Congress were not really interested in the growth of secularism in Indian politics. A fakir, Paras Ram, of the Kangra Valley had been actively preaching in Malabar on the eve of this rebellion.²³⁷

Both Gandhi and Mohammad Ali repudiated all responsibility for the Moplah disturbances. The AICC claimed that the Moplahs had been provoked beyond endurance. All the same, it protested against their excesses at the November meeting.²³⁸

In September 1921 the Muslims demanded immediate adoption of civil disobedience and in November, the AICC²³⁹ meeting in Delhi permitted civil disobedience and boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales. It also authorized Gandhi to allow civil disobedience in respect of the

grazing tax in some parts of Andhra in case the situation demanded it. Taking the cue from this the Andhra leaders disregarded the forest laws and grazed their cattle on forest land and carried away the forest products.

Meanwhile, in August, Gandhi had told the people of Bihar that Hindu and Muslim quarrels would push the final stage of the attainment of swaraj further.²⁴⁰ Obviously he was aware that the two communities were drifting apart.

A hartal was observed on 17 November, the day when the Prince of Wales arrived in India to open the new Imperial Legislative Assembly. The Congress totally boycotted all celebrations connected with the visit. There were clashes in Bombay on the Prince's arrival and several people were killed and wounded. The efforts of Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu and others to pacify the crowd failed. Gandhi fasted for five days and declared that swaraj 'stank in his nostrils' because of this violence.

Compared to the Khilafatist volunteers, the Congress volunteers were orderly. But both sections organized hartals and boycott of foreign cloth. Thousands were arrested.

The hartal of 17 November was very successful in Bihar and Orissa, but at the same time there was a distinct revival of the anti-cow-killing movement among the Hindus and as a corollary, an intense religious agitation among the Muslims, especially the *ulema*, who opposed the Khilafat Committee.

However, in Champaran, Muzaffarpur and some other areas of Bihar, the Non-cooperation Movement progressed well.²⁴¹ Besides disobeying the laws and refusing to pay taxes and register documents, etc., the court and other government buildings were declared swaraj property and the officers and men were asked to surrender their uniforms and badges. Trouble in the famous Sonapur mela was averted but some sadhus of the Calcutta Gorakshini Sabha prevented any cow slaughter there.

Meanwhile Gandhi had issued an appeal to the Muslims of Madurai, soon after the arrest of the Ali brothers, and asked them to maintain amity with the Hindus. 'We must remain non-violent, but we must not be passive. We must repeat the formula of the Brothers regarding the duty of soldiers and invite imprisonment.'²⁴² He had asked the people to declare from a thousand platforms that it was sinful for any Muslim or Hindu to serve the existing government, whether as soldier or in any other capacity.

Gandhi deplored the prosecution of the Ali brothers and pointed out that the National Congress had begun to tamper with the loyalty of the sepoys a year earlier. The Central Khilafat Committee had done it even

earlier: 'India had a right openly to tell the sepoy and everyone who served the Government in any capacity whatsoever that he participated in the wrongs done by the Government.' Then he wondered why the Ali brothers were arrested, for at Karachi they merely repeated the Congress declaration in terms of Islam. He advised the Muslims not to slacken their efforts.

Such statements, and particularly Gandhi's in his Trichnapally speech, in *Young India* as noted above, and his manifesto in the *Bombay Chronicle* signed also by C.R. Das, Raghavachari and others, set the government thinking about Gandhi's arrest and prosecution. Unaware of this, Gandhi continued his defiant posture.

Tej Bahadur Sapru, now the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, took note of the danger posed by the Manifesto of Gandhi²⁴³ and his associates particularly with regard to creating disaffection in the army. However, arresting and prosecuting Gandhi, he felt, would be unwise as, during the last one year, his influence had extended over a much larger area than the government realized. Gandhi, he remarked, was not just a politician in the eyes of the masses: he had all the sanctity of a holy man attached to him. He was invaluable for the Muslims, securing as he did Hindu support for the Khilafat. The wealthy people of Bombay and Calcutta supported him and 'with the labouring classes he and his party unquestionably wield a most powerful influence which cannot be ignored'.²⁴⁴ Even some Moderates, opposing his views, respected him for his personal character.

Sapru, eminent lawyer that he was, set out the following points against the arrest and prosecution of Gandhi: (a) so far there was no evidence of any overt act on his part amounting to actual tampering with the army; (b) many other leaders commanding great influence and actively preaching what Gandhi was doing, would also have to be prosecuted at a time when the temper of the people was 'very different from what it was in 1919'. The 'steady defiance of law and authority' during the last couple of years had emboldened people a good deal; jail had lost its terror; imprisonment was now 'the hall-mark of patriotism' and, in any case, the removal of Gandhi and some others would not kill the Non-cooperation Movement; (c) there would be a terrible agitation for the release of Gandhi and his colleagues which would be difficult to resist; (d) the arrest and prosecution of Gandhi and others would obstruct the ceremonies connected with the Prince of Wales's visit; (e) Rabindranath Tagore had recently opposed Gandhi's propaganda; the Tilak Party in the south was doing the same; the Hindus were now realizing what the Khilafat agitation was doing; (f) the government had so far desisted from interfering with the non-cooperation propaganda except to prosecute some people under section 144 of the Cr.P.C., so the

prosecution of Gandhi and others would be interpreted as an act of calculated repression; (g) not even the Moderate Party as a whole would approve of Gandhi's prosecution and, in any case, it commanded little influence in the country; even the legislature would not support the government on this question; and (h) Gandhi's prosecution would not fully suppress the demand for swaraj and the revision of the Turkish treaty.

Sapru thus gave a very good assessment of the situation, taking stock of the sociological and political impact Gandhi's movement had made. He felt that the government should wait till Gandhi through some overt act placed himself in the wrong so that his prosecution would not look unreasonable.

The government's reasons in favour of Gandhi's immediate prosecution were spelled out thus: (a) the government's inaction on this issue of 'avowed seditious papers' could not be justified; (b) the possible disheartening effect on Moderate opinion; (c) the possible impression created among the Muslims; (d) the prosecution of Gandhi was inevitable unless Gandhi changed his programme; (e) his prosecution during the Prince's visit would be more troublesome; (f) no government could allow such attacks on the army and the police to continue unchecked.

Ultimately, the government decided to wait for some time. Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee in its meeting at Gandhi's residence deplored the tragic occurrence in Bombay on 17 November leading to racial strife and ending in the loss of life and property. The importance of non-violence for the attainment of the country's goal, it said, could not be minimized.

In a manifesto to his co-workers²⁴⁵ Gandhi deplored the role of the Christians and the Parsis in the Bombay agitation. 'The way to immediate swaraj', he said, 'lies through our gaining control over the forces of violence and that not by greater violence but by moral influence.'

The most important example of the impact of the Non-cooperation Movement on the agrarian classes had been the unrest among the oppressed Assam tea garden 'coolies'. Many of them left for their homes in Madras, CP, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh when they heard about the reputed mystical power of Gandhi to ameliorate the condition of the poor and the oppressed.²⁴⁶ With cries of *Gandhi Maharaj ki jai*, about 12,000 indentured labourers left the plantations for their homes. At Chandpur, a representative of the European Tea Association of Assam with the help of the SDO tried to persuade them to go back in the tea gardens. In panic they rushed to the steamer and many of them were drowned in the river. While the rest were being driven to the railway station, some of them assaulted the magistrate. The district authorities

retaliated and let loose Gurkha soldiers on them who made them stand in the open while it was raining heavily. This outrage led to a complete hartal at Chandpur. The whole rail and steamer service was disrupted and the local Congressmen looked after about 400 stranded workers.²⁴⁷

The government saw in the exodus of these 'coolies' the hand of the non-cooperators, for the workers asserted that they were 'acting under the orders of Gandhi Maharaj' who, they believed, was the ruler of the country.²⁴⁸ Such myths about Gandhi were current in every part of India. In some areas Gandhi had been held by the people to be a person able to cure all evils, including high prices, and his name figured wherever there was grievance.²⁴⁹

According to the British Indian government, the real danger of the Non-cooperation Movement lay in the influence it exercised over the ignorant masses.²⁵⁰ It had, by and large, failed, they naively thought, among the educated classes, but

the factory hands and the railway employees who strike, the convicts who have broken out of jail, the coolies who have migrated from Assam and the peasants who recently defied law and order in Oudh, all proclaim Gandhi as their leader and appear to think that if they obey what are represented as his orders, the British raj will disappear and a golden age of prosperity for India will begin.²⁵¹

The Government was aware of the dangers underlying this non-violent movement among the 'ignorant masses' and 'the general disrespect for law and order and the contempt for authority it engenders'.²⁵²

Towards the end of 1921 it was realized that swaraj was certainly not coming by the year end. The attention of the Congress was diverted to other matters.²⁵³ All the same, the Non-cooperation Movement had struck deep chords in the hearts of the people and radically transformed their character. It was realized by thinking people that swaraj was not an end in itself but a means to a better social order, for Gandhi told them not to drink intoxicating liquor, not to wear foreign cloth, not to gamble, and not to speculate in foodstuffs or cotton.²⁵⁴

On 23 November, Gandhi gave a week's notice to the Government of India that if swaraj was not granted and the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs redressed by 1 December 1921, the British raj would end in the taluka of Bardoli in the Surat District.²⁵⁵ He and other satyagrahis would go to the police station and tell the policemen and other government functionaries to join the Non-cooperation Movement on the salary they were getting at the moment. The general masses would be advised to boycott the courts and police stations and resolve not to be dispersed in spite of police firing.

The AICC met in Bombay on 23 and 24 November and deplored the tragic occurrences in Bombay on 17 November. All the non-cooperation volunteers were brought under one central organization called the National Volunteer Corps. The provincial Congress committees would appoint central boards of their own to enforce discipline.²⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the movement had gathered momentum in several provinces. The situation became so grave in North Bihar that the governor and council, on the recommendation of the Tirhut commissioner, and with the approval of the Government of India, extended the Seditious Meeting Act first to the district of Champaran and then to the other disturbed parts of the Tirhut Division.²⁵⁷

In Orissa, Gopabandhu Das's trial created a good deal of excitement, but he was eventually acquitted, which was celebrated as a triumph for non-cooperation.²⁵⁸

In many areas of Bihar washermen refused to wash European clothes and the drivers of horse-driven carriages declined to carry passengers wearing foreign clothes.²⁵⁹ Even in the tribal areas of the Santal Parganas and Chhota Nagpur public meetings and processions were organized.

There were prosecutions galore. The secretary of the Muzaffarpur Congress Committee was prosecuted for using a duplicating machine. Many public servants were retired. In December 1921 the Bihar government took the following measures to combat the non-cooperation campaign: (a) the prosecution of persons directly or indirectly arousing hatred or disaffection; (b) the prosecution of local agitators, even sadhus who were inciting the police or armymen; (c) the institution of proceedings against those who usurped the jurisdiction of the courts or put illegal pressure on unwilling people; (d) the employment of armed forces on occasions; (e) some action to prevent the non-cooperators from securing the control of local bodies; (f) protection of importers and dealers in foreign cloth; (g) vigorous counter propaganda.²⁶⁰

The Bihar government, however, realized that it was no easy task to contain the spread of disaffection among the troops and the police as well as to stop the drilling of non-cooperation volunteers without legal authority. They proposed to invoke some provisions of the second part of Act XIV of 1908 to deal with the volunteer movement which helped in picketing and 'intimidation' a great deal.²⁶¹

The Non-cooperation Movement was in full swing and many of its leaders had been arrested, many titles had been renounced, lawyers and students were out of the courts and educational institutions when the 36th session of the Congress was held at Ahmedabad on 27 and 28 December 1921 under the presidentship of Hakim Ajmal Khan as C.R. Das was in jail. The Ahmedabad Congress noted that, since the adop-

tion of non-violent non-cooperation by the Nagpur Congress, India had progressed much in terms of fearlessness, self-sacrifice and self-respect. So this Congress confirmed the resolution of the Special Congress at Calcutta in September 1920 and resolved to continue the movement till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were redressed and swaraj won.

This Congress advised all Congressmen to offer themselves for arrest by enrolling themselves into the volunteer corps. They were not to be cowed down by the repressions and threats of the government. They were to take the pledge prescribed by the Congress Working Committee on 23 November: They were to remain non-violent in word and deed and try to be non-violent in intent. They were to promote the unity of all religious communities, believe in swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation and to wear hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. If a Hindu, he was to shun untouchability. Every volunteer was to be prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault or even death and in the case of imprisonment he was not to claim any assistance for his family.

The Congress appealed to all non-believers in full non-cooperation to at least demand and insist upon the redressal of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and to insist on the immediate granting of swaraj.

One important feature of the Ahmedabad Congress was the notable part played by the Muslim *ulema* in advising the Congress on political matters. Some of them did not like the requirement of the observance of non-violence in 'thought' also.

The Ahmedabad Congress was the first held under the new constitution. More than this, the delegates assembled had a new outlook on national problems. They were now convinced that national salvation could be won only by forces within India, and not from outside. It met at a time when ruthless repression was going on.²⁶² At Ahmedabad the delegates vested in Gandhi the sole executive authority and powers of the Congress.

The acting president was glad that the method of non-cooperation to fight injustice had been borrowed by the Egyptians and this movement was becoming 'an Asiatic movement'.²⁶³ He did not think the Non-cooperation Movement as such was responsible for the sad incidents on the Malabar coast. The blame for provoking the Moplahs, he said, rested 'entirely on the shoulders of the Government', and condemned the ruthless suppression there. He, however, sympathized with the Hindus who had been forcibly converted or suffered otherwise at the hands of the Moplahs.

Presenting C.R. Das's presidential address, Gandhi emphasized Das's 'firm belief in non-violence'.²⁶⁴ Das's address appreciated India's

determined opposition to the imposition of a foreign culture upon it as Finland, Poland, Ireland and Egypt had done. He dismissed armed resistance as beyond the range of practical politics and, personally, he was opposed to violence. So one had to choose between co-operation and non-cooperation with the government. The Congress, he said, had its eye fixed on the ultimate and would reject even the Montford reforms which did not recognize the freedom of the Indian people.

From late December 1921 there was a remarkable increase in non-cooperation activities.²⁶⁵ A few jail officers in Bihar and Orissa resigned as they were influenced by the non-cooperators inside the jails, and themselves joined the movement.²⁶⁶

The picketing against liquor was strong in the Bhagalpur and Hazaribagh districts of Bihar.²⁶⁷ In some places non-cooperation volunteers assaulted the liquor sellers.²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, negotiations between M.M. Malaviya and other Congress leaders and the new viceroy, Reading, failed. At one stage the government was willing to release the civil disobedience prisoners and hold a Round Table Conference in March with 22 representatives of the Congress to consider the Reform Scheme.²⁶⁹ But failure came about as a result of their refusal to release all the Khilafat prisoners.

From 14 to 16 January 1922, an All Parties' Conference was held in Bombay. Gandhi spelled out the position of the non-cooperators and agreed to assist the conference but refused to join it in the face of government repression. Later, he joined the Subjects Committee of twenty members. Again he explained the position of the non-cooperators.

The conference condemned the repressive policy of the government and requested the Congress to postpone the civil disobedience movement for the time being. The Working Committee of the Congress did postpone it, but Gandhi had other plans. On 1 February he gave notice to the viceroy that he would start civil disobedience, a no-tax campaign, at Bardoli.

To Gandhi's manifesto of 1 February the government replied immediately, justifying their repressive policy as a response to the Bombay and other riots.

7. Chauri Chaura and the Withdrawal of the Movement

Soon, however, events elsewhere overtook the proposed Bardoli campaign. On 5 February, when a Congress procession of demonstrators was in progress at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur District of UP the police tried to halt it and opened fire. Eventually their ammunition was exhausted and 21 constables were pushed by the demonstrators into the

police station, the building set on fire, and the unfortunate victims burnt. Already in Bombay, and three weeks earlier during the Prince of Wales's visit to Madras some violence had occurred.

The government called it a rebellion as a police post was 'the symbol of the Raj'.²⁷⁰ Gandhi called the tragedy an 'index finger', called off the civil disobedience movement and fasted for five days as penance for the violence. He said God had clearly spoken to him through Chauri Chaura.²⁷¹

This incident was the proverbial last straw for Gandhi.

Indeed, those who resorted to violence at Chauri Chaura were believers in the 'power and glory' of Gandhi and were sure that he was bringing in swaraj.²⁷² The myth of Gandhi had permeated the peasant mind and given them 'an unusual strength, enabling them to become political actors in their own right'.²⁷³

But Gandhi did not know this and he told an angry Jawaharlal Nehru that if the civil disobedience had not been suspended, 'he would have been leading not a non-violent struggle, but essentially a violent struggle'.²⁷⁴

Sixteen years later, Gandhi recalled that the Chauri Chaura 'lawlessness' might have been due to the feeling at the back of the people's mind that now there was Congress raj and they could get away with anything. But the Congress raj was yet to come.²⁷⁵

The Congress Working Committee at its meeting at Bardoli on 12 February 1922 condemned the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura and expressed sympathy with the bereaved families of the constables killed there. The zamindars were assured that the Congress movement would not attack their legal rights. The Working Committee endorsed the suspension of the mass civil disobedience movement. All activities leading to arrest and imprisonment, all volunteer processions and public meetings for the sake of defiance were to stop.

It was decided to undertake a constructive programme. The charkha was to be popularized; a crore of members had to be enrolled; national schools, temperance and panchayats were to be paid full attention.

Gandhi's sudden application of brakes to the movement and the Bardoli resolutions created mixed feelings. Many still had great faith in Gandhi and were willing to follow him at any cost, while others were angry. As Jawaharlal later recalled, 'the whole scene shifted, and we in prison learnt, to our amazement and consternation that Gandhiji had stopped the aggressive aspects of our struggle, that he had suspended civil resistance'.²⁷⁶

The political-cum-religious philosophy of Gandhi was beyond Motilal's comprehension and he advised his son that it was better to

serve the country from outside rather than remain in jail to atone for the crime of Chauri Chaura.²⁷⁷

Rabindranath Tagore had already expressed misgivings about the non-violent mass civil disobedience under Gandhi's leadership and his play *Muktadhara* was based on this theme. The sad episode of Chauri Chaura proved these misgivings true. But Gandhi had then assured Tagore that non-cooperation would pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation based on mutual respect and trust.

The Chauri Chaura episode, however, showed the importance Gandhi attached to non-violence. First he wanted to prepare the people for another phase of the movement and therefore the constructive programme received full attention. The exultation of the non-cooperation days was over and factional and communal politics began to dominate the scene.

Judith Brown unjustly blames Gandhi for the collapse of his movement:

By offering the programme of non-cooperation to the multifarious forces at work in Indian public life he initiated a process he could not control, which drifted towards violence, invited repression from the raj, landed in prison his most able henchmen who might have been able to steer the movement, made him hesitate to resort to the final stage of civil disobedience, and finally prompted him to call off civil disobedience entirely.²⁷⁸

The AICC in its meeting on 24 and 25 February almost endorsed the Bardoli resolutions of the Working Committee. It permitted individual²⁷⁹ civil disobedience only with regard to local grievances under the supervision and control of the provincial Congress committees. Even for these the conditions laid down by the Congress had to be observed. The liquor and foreign cloth picketing had to continue.

At this meeting, however, Gandhi was bitterly criticized even by his devoted followers. He was assailed for the Bardoli resolutions in general. And the CID men mixed with the audience and reported to the government that the atmosphere for his arrest was favourable.

Meanwhile, the visit of the Prince of Wales to the different cities of North-Western India was marred by protests.²⁸⁰ Shops were closed, the people were prevented from attending the welcome processions and the people participating in them were insulted.

8. Gandhi's Arrest (1922)

On 10 February 1922 the Bihar government informed the district magistrates that Gandhi was to be arrested soon and that adequate security measures had to be taken.²⁸¹ Any prominent leader advocating civil

disobedience was to be prosecuted under section 124A. Action could also be taken under sections 108 and 114, Criminal Procedure Code, in the case of 'repeated offences'. The Bihar Government feared that with the removal of 'the apostle of non-violence' some 'extremists' might feel that the time for violent activity had arrived.

But the government waited another month and Congressmen all over India continued picketing liquor shops and the government repression continued. For example, the Buxar Subdivisional Congress in Bihar carried on vigorous picketing in the Berhampur fair and the district authorities demolished their camp and brutally assaulted the volunteers.²⁸²

The Bengal Provincial Congress and Khilafat Committees accepted the Bardoli resolutions as amended by the Delhi Conference and picketing and collection of funds were revived.

The police brutalities on the non-violent satyagrahis was unprecedented: often the volunteers' skulls were broken or genitalia crushed.²⁸³

In Madras the Bardoli resolutions were accepted. But in North Arcot and in Trichinopoly some volunteer activity continued.²⁸⁴

In Malabar, the rebel leader, Konnara Tangal, was still at large. The arrest of 100 men in the Pukkottur area under the Mopilla Act led to some trouble. Under the new ordinance, the martial law rule regarding meetings was re-issued.

In Ajmer Merwara, the joint meeting of the Jamait-ul-Ulema, the Jamait-ul-Tulaba, the Provincial Political Conference and the Khilafat tried to convince the general masses that Gandhi's Bardoli resolutions had been misinterpreted.²⁸⁵

The national leaders upheld the Delhi resolutions and reaffirmed that non-violence must be observed. Gandhi visited Ajmer and met the *ulema* assembled there. The resolution of Abdul Bari and Hasrat Mohani advocating violence was defeated by Gandhi's on non-violence.

In Assam there was a series of fires in the month of March and many houses were destroyed. But the Punjab was almost quiet, especially in the urban areas.²⁸⁶ Picketing, however, continued in Kharar and the Ambala Districts and Congress volunteers courted arrest.

According to a government report, Gandhi's hold over the Muslim non-cooperators was diminishing because of his vacillation. A popular song in Jalandhar criticized him for getting others arrested while saving himself.²⁸⁷ Lala Lajpat Rai was sentenced on 9 March to one year's simple imprisonment.

The strike in the East Indian Railway continued with sporadic cases of assault, intimidation and extensive looting. On 10 March, the quarters of the Gurkha *chaukidars* at Asansol were burnt. The same day, the editor of the *Vishwamitra* of Calcutta was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, the apology of *Ishrar* was accepted and the prosecution of *Bande Mataram* was sanctioned.

The *Tribune* and the *Azad* found the sentence passed on Lajpat Rai unduly harsh. But the *Akhbar-i-Am* urged the abandonment of non-cooperation and the *Vakil* called the so-called Hindu-Muslim unity a sham.

In Bihar and Orissa the non-cooperators were still undecided as to whether they should follow the constructive elements in the Bardoli programme or whether they should revive the picketing of liquor shops. Rumours were spreading in the Santal Parganas that with the advent of Gandhi raj the tribals would get free drink.

When the movement had declined considerably, the Government struck and arrested Gandhi at his Sabarmati Ashram on 10 March.²⁸⁸ This was denounced by all Indian newspapers, Moderate and Extremist. *Dnyan Prakash* called it a 'tactical blunder' on the part of the government as Gandhi was fast losing his influence in the country. The *Kesari* thought that the arrest was due to pressure from England where trade and commerce had been adversely affected by the boycott movement.

The government was surprised at the calmness with which the news of Gandhi's arrest was received. It was suggested in a government report that it was desirable to disabuse the minds of the common people 'of the myth that this leader was too strong for Government to tackle'.

According to a Bombay Government report, the news of Gandhi's arrest was received quietly throughout this presidency 'with a feeling [of] relief in business circles'.²⁸⁹ The government waited anxiously for the successor to Gandhi to be nominated by the Congress, for the attitude of the Muslims would very much depend on who that person was. Even before his arrest there was some rift between the Hindus and Muslims in some areas.

The trial of Gandhi on a charge of sedition began on 18 March at Ahmedabad. The entire court rose when Gandhi entered. The prosecution produced three of Gandhi's 'seditious' articles.²⁹⁰ Gandhi pleaded guilty. He owned responsibility for the sad occurrences in Madras, Bombay and Chauri Chaura. His long written statement shows how from 'a staunch loyalist and co-operator' he had to become 'an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-cooperator'. He had rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-cooperation the way out of the unnatural state in which both were living. The judge and the asses-

sors, he said, should either resign their posts, thus dissociating themselves from an evil law, or inflict on him the severest penalty.

Gandhi was convicted to six years' imprisonment as Tilak earlier had been, and Gandhi was proud of his name being associated with that of the Lokamanya. He also thanked the judge.²⁹¹

A day before his arrest Gandhi had written an article entitled 'If I am Arrested' in *Young India*, expressing his anguish at the spirit of violence prevailing in the country. He had asked his workers not to organize any hartal or procession in protest against his arrest. The Bardoli programme, if fulfilled, he thought, would not only release him but inaugurate swaraj.

But Gandhi's imprisonment created a shock. In the Punjab a hartal was observed in the important towns.²⁹² The official report that the Muslims did not generally take part in the demonstrations, because the Hindus had not participated in similar demonstrations after the arrest and conviction of the Ali brothers, does not seem to be true.

Even though the Congress party had instructed the people not to protest, some serious incidents took place in Bengal. In UP also protest meetings were held. The sentence of six years was generally considered 'too severe'.²⁹³ The Bombay Piece Goods Association decided, on 30 March in Bombay, that its members should not deal directly or indirectly in foreign goods until Gandhi's release.²⁹⁴

Gandhi's arrest and conviction figured prominently in the Indian press. According to the *Servant of India*, 'Neither as a deliberate provocation nor as a measure of fancied self-defence is the arrest of Mr Gandhi at this juncture anything but idiotic.' The *Indu Prakash* described the sentence on Gandhi as 'inhuman, cruel, unkind and arbitrary'. The *Dnyan Prakash* called it 'severe beyond expectations and his conviction on the basis of his own admission as not legally sound'. However, the *Kaisar-i-Hind* thought the sentence justified on this basis.

In Orissa it was rumoured that recent fires were caused by God, following Gandhi's arrest. On the other hand, in CP, Gandhi's imprisonment did not cause much trouble. Perhaps the non-cooperators had accepted Gandhi's injunction against protests.

The Maharashtra leaders seemed to be disillusioned with the non-cooperation programme for the attainment of swaraj and looked to C.R. Das as the only capable successor to Gandhi. The Nagpur Congress Committee appointed a small sub-committee to consider their future programme.

After Gandhi's conviction the Congress Working Committee remained busy for three months in adjusting to the new situation. The khadi movement was geared to the needs of the situation and the relief

work in Malabar was stepped up. A committee was appointed to enquire into Moplah outbreak. Another committee was to formulate a plan for removing untouchability.

By the summer of 1922, the Non-cooperation Movement declined and the Congress organization was distracted by squabbles. Since the intellectuals in this party were not enamoured of the constructive programme and many wanted to enter the legislatures, a split was in the air. Gandhi had to let the Swarajists dominate the political stage for some time.²⁹⁵

In retrospect, one can say that the Non-cooperation Movement (from 1 August 1920 to March 1922) was sustained by 'the enthusiasm, devotion and self-sacrificing spirit of the people'.²⁹⁶ This movement failed to achieve its two objects: the restitution of the Turkish Caliphate and the attainment of swaraj. However, the fight between what Gandhi called the 'soul force' and the 'material force' led to a general awakening of the masses to their political rights. There was now a total loss of faith in the existing system of government and it was realized that only through their own efforts could India hope to achieve freedom. As the Madras governor noted, this movement 'spread political ideas among the masses of the people' and their complacency was disturbed.²⁹⁷

Both on the moral and the political front the Congress made some gains. It was now considered the only organization that could deliver the goods. Now the Indians under this organization could not be cowed down.

The movement ushered in a new era and had a strong psychological impact on the minds of the people. The British knew for sure that they were unwelcome in India and their self-confidence and complacency were thoroughly shaken.

Gandhi was right when he said that if he had not suspended the movement it would have got derailed. He was also right in claiming that the movement achieved in one year what could not have been achieved in thirty years by earlier methods. In any case, the seeds of future campaigns were sown by this movement.²⁹⁸

About two decades later, a sceptic and 'God-fearing political friend' wrote to Gandhi: 'Non-cooperation hits one from behind and in a manner more deadly than the deadliest weapon'. He had cried when in the 1920s he had seen Gandhi using it; for 'selfish people' used his name in order to gain their selfish ends and to create misery for the people.²⁹⁹

To this Gandhi replied that, like opium and other drugs, non-cooperation might be misused at times, but it was useful in most cases. 'The net effect of non-violent non-cooperation has been of the greatest benefit to India. It has brought about an awakening which would prob-

ably have taken generations otherwise.³⁰⁰ It prevented bloodshed and anarchy. Gandhi also criticized those non-cooperators who wanted some compensation from the Congress government (1937-9) for their sacrifices.

Undoubtedly, in spite of the myths and hagiography surrounding the first non-cooperation movement and Gandhi,³⁰¹ no one can deny that 'these were the halcyon days of Indian nationalism, when the whole country seemed to move for the first time against the might of its imperial rulers'.³⁰²

Notes and References

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7. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1983, p. 176.
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13. Resolution XXIII of the 1918 Congress thankfully acknowledged the valuable services of Rai who represented the Congress view in the USA.
14. This was particularly true of the Punjab. See Motilal Nehru's presidential speech at the 1919 Congress at Amritsar.
15. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. I, p. 283. This special Congress discussed the 'Montford' scheme. Tilak visited England in August 1918, reorganized the British Congress Committee there and the management of its paper *India*. He also contacted the leaders of the Labour Party there.
16. Ibid., p. 288. C.Y. Chintamani boasted that a senior president of the Congress was the chairman of their reception committee, one of the

proposals was moved by another ex-president and was supported by a third ex-president of the Congress.

17. Ibid.
18. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru : A Biography*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1975, p. 42. In February 1919 the Secretary of the UP Kisan Sabha based at Allahabad thanked the AICC for allowing 700 free delegates from among the peasants as well as for exempting them from the delegate fee in the coming Congress also.
19. L.P. Sinha, *The Left-Wing in India*, Muzaffarpur, 1965, pp. 45-56.
20. Ibid., p. 32.
21. Tendulkar, op. cit., p. 283.
22. Resolution III, No. 2, I.N.C. session at Delhi.
23. Resolution IV. On 10 December 1917 a sedition committee headed by Mr Justice S.A. Rowlatt with two Indian members had been appointed to investigate and report on the revolutionary movement in India. Its report had been submitted in April 1918. It denounced the revolutionary activities of Tilak, but he became so popular that even though he was in England he was elected the president of the Congress carded for Delhi. The committee recommended some changes in the machinery of law to deal effectively with the terrorists.
24. Motilal Nehru, Congress Presidential Address, 1919.
25. Tendulkar, op. cit., p. 292, R.C. Majumdar calls it *annus mirabilis*', op.cit., p. 292.
26. R. Kumar, *Essays*, op. cit., 'Introduction', pp. 1-2.
27. M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Ahmedabad, reprint, 1963, p. 278.
28. Ibid., p. 280.
29. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 301.
30. First in South Africa and then in Champaran (Bihar) and in Gujarat.
31. President of the Congress in 1901.
32. Their Manifesto, 2 March, Home (Pol.), March 1919, No. 250. T.B. Saprú and ten others signed this manifesto, believing that the satyagraha would obstruct the Montford reform proposals.
33. *Report on the Punjab Disturbances*, April 1919, p. 71.
34. Gandhi was the Chairman and S. Naidu, Horniman, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankar Lal Banker and others were members.
35. Motilal Nehru, op. cit.
36. *Young India*, Ahmedabad, 19 Feb. 1919.
37. Motilal Nehru, op. cit.
38. Ibid.
39. *Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council*, April 1918 to March 1919, LVII, No. 453. Patel had joined the Congress in 1886 and had been its president in 1909 and 1918.
40. Malaviya joined the Congress in 1886 and had been a member of the AICC (1906-17).
41. Member, AICC (1906-17).
42. A Congress leader of Bihar and Orissa.
43. Chairman, Reception Committee, Amaraoti Congress Session, 1897.
44. Sastri to Saprú, 4 March 1919, V.S.S. Sastri Papers, No. 305, NAI.

45. Sastri to S.G. Vaze, 3 March 1919, *ibid.*, No. 300.
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47. 9 March 1919.
48. *Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council*, April 1918 to March 1919, LVII, p. 871.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 872.
50. B.S. Sharma, *Gandhi as a Political Thinker*, Allahabad, 1956, p. 65.
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53. Bombay, 18 March 1919.
54. *Maharatta*, Poona, 23 March 1919.
55. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 281.
56. *Young India*, 9 April 1919.
57. J.M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power, Indian Politics 1915-22*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 175.
58. Chelmsford Papers, Vol. 22, Roll 10, No. 195, telegram. Gandhi in his message of 9 April told his countrymen: 'It was galling to remain free whilst the Rowlatt legislation [passed on 18 March] disfigured the Statute Book. My arrest makes me free.'
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60. *Ibid.*
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63. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
64. Rai cited the cases of Raliyaram, Abdulla, Manoharlal, Gurdevi and others who were badly humiliated or insulted.
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67. *Mahatma Gandhi*, London, 1924, p. 39.
68. Calcutta, 15 April 1919.
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72. Report of the General Secretaries of the AICC. Also proceedings of the meeting.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. AICC papers 1919, File 6, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (henceforth NMML).
76. The members were M.A. Jinnah, M.R. Jayakar, K.R. Iyengar, Motilal Nehru and V.J. Patel.
77. Chelmsford Papers, 1919, Vol. 22, Roll 10, No. 554 (a).
78. 4 June 1919.
79. Bihar government to Patna Commissioner, 22 May 1919, No. 2386, S.B., File No. 176, Pol. (Special) Department, Government of Bihar & Orissa, 1919.

80. Motilal, Shraddhanand, Purushottam Das Tandon who had joined the Congress way back in 1890, Ganpat Rai, Bakshi Tekchand, K. Santhanam and Lala Mulk Raj joined them. C.F. Andrews also helped the committee.
81. Gandhi and the Congress had asked the Commission to release the leaders pending the enquiry. They had also requested that one revision judge should be from outside the Punjab and that the revision judges should be empowered to call for further evidence.
82. *The Collected Works of M.K. Gandhi*, Vol. XV, No. 375.
83. Home Pol. B, Feb. 1920, No. 373.
84. *The Searchlight*, Patna, 17 July 1919.
85. *Ibid.*, editorial.
86. Gandhi, Motilal, C.R. Das, A.K. Fazlul Haq (Joint Secretary, INC, 1917 and General Secretary, 1918-19), A. Tyabji, K. Santhanam (to act as Secretary) were the members.
87. AICC papers, File No. 2, 1919, NMML.
88. *Ibid.*
89. B.G. Tilak to G.S. Khaparde, 24 July 1919; G.S. Khaparde Papers, File 1-11, National Archives of India (henceforth NAI).
90. President of the Congress (1915).
91. S. Gopal (ed.), *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (1903-24), Vol. I, p. 130. Also see S. Gopal (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*, Delhi, 1981, p. 23.
92. Had rejoined the Congress in 1916.
93. G.N. Mishra to V.J. Patel, 15 October 1919; AICC Papers, File No. 3, 1919, NMML.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*
96. Motilal to P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, 12 Dec. 1919; P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer Papers, serial No. 4791, NAI.
97. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 5 Jan. 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, Feb. 1920, No. 52. But for the efforts of Malaviya and Gandhi the Congress would have rejected the Government of India Act (1919).
98. P.D. Kaushik, *The Congress Ideology and Programme, 1920-47*, Bombay-New Delhi, 1964, p. 34.
99. Presidential Address, A.M. & S.G. Zaidi (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of I.N.C.*, New Delhi, 1980, Vol. 7, Book 5, p. 470. M.R. Jayakar found Motilal's speech disappointing: Jayakar's Diary, 1919, NAI. The government felt alarmed at three proposals of this Congress: (a) a supplementary Congress in the Punjab in the spring, (b) a memorial in Jallianwala Bagh, (c) the case should be reopened before the Hunter Committee.
100. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 156-60. The report was signed by Gandhi, C.R. Das, A.B. Tyabji, and M.R. Jayakar.
101. The crawling and other punitive orders were unworthy of a civilized administration (Jayakar Collections, Correspondence File No. 477, Punjab Inquiry, 11): 'The circumstances relating to the firing... also confirm the suspicion that the carnage was premeditated and intended to be complete and revengeful.'

102. It had been set up on 14 October and began its sittings on 29 October 1919, taking evidence at Delhi, Lahore, Ahmedabad and Bombay. Mr Justice G.C. Rankin and 6 others, including 3 Indians comprised the committee.
103. Minority Report, 1920, pp. 109-10.
104. Chelmsford to Montagu, 3 May 1920; Home Pol. A, June 1920, Nos. 126-64 and K.W.
105. AICC Papers (supplementary), 1920; File No. 18, NMML.
106. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 297: 'My attendance at the previous Congresses was nothing more perhaps than an annual renewal of allegiance to the Congress.' Gandhi had found that the late Lokamanya Tilak, Deshbandhu C.R. Das, Motilal and other leaders of the Congress had been pleased with his hard work in connection with the Punjab enquiry.
107. Shaukat Ali, b. 1873, of the Rampur zamindar family of UP; journalist, politician. Interned 1915-19 and again 1921; Mohamed Ali, b. 1878, brother of Shaukat; journalist, politician; Interned with his brother.
108. Proceedings, AICC, 20-21 April 1919, Appendix A.
109. 27 August 1919.
110. Assistant Secretary, AICC, to V.J. Patel, General Secretary, INC, 11 December 1919; AICC office, Lucknow, NMML.
The Searchlight of Patna (30 November 1919) appreciated the resolution of the Khilafat Conference urging for the first time non-cooperation with the British Government. It was surprising indeed that the Tana Bhagats in the remote parts of Chotta Nagpur (South Bihar) combined around this time their own agrarian grievances with the non-cooperation movement. Diary, S.P. Ranchi, 13 Dec. 1919, File No. 86 of 1919, Pol. (Spl.), Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1919. Also, Extract, Bihar & Orissa Police Intelligence, 19 April 1919, File No. 86 of 1919, Pol. (Special) Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1919, Bihar Archives.
111. Brown, op. cit., p. 198.
112. Motilal, Presidential Address, *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., p. 520.
113. Ibid., p. 521. See Abdul Bari's appeal on Hindu-Muslim co-operation, *The Searchlight*, 16 Oct. 1919, p. 8.
114. P. Sitaramayya, *A History of The Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, p. 189.
115. J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 69.
116. Major Vivian to Lt Col S.F. Musprath, 5 Jan. 1920, Home Pol. B, February 1920, No. 315.
117. B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale, Gandhi and the Nehrus*, New York, 1974, p. 146.
118. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 2 February 1920, Home Pol. Deposit, Feb. 1920, No. 75.
119. *The Leader*, 3 March 1920. This meeting was resumed on 29 February. These two meetings of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference in the Calcutta Town Hall were attended by leading Hindus and Muslims including some Punjab leaders. The attitude of the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Christian prelates and statesmen as regards the Muslim empire of Turkey was denounced and it was decided that the Indian Muslims would end their loyalty to Britain and help the *Khalifa*.
120. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 2 Feb. 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, Feb. 1920, No. 75.

121. Tendulkar, op. cit., p. 345.
122. Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 191.
123. Home Pol. A, Aug. 1920, Nos. 235-49. It was said that depriving the *Khalifa* of his suzerainty over Arabia was to reduce the *Khilafat* to a nullity.
124. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 4 March 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, March 1920, No. 89.
125. In its issue of 6 Aug. 1919, *Young India* had referred to some letter of a District Judge in this regard and on 11 December 1919 a *rule nisi* had been issued.
126. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 9 March 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, March 1920, No. 89.
127. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 5 April 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, April 1920, No. 103.
128. Gandhi's rich experience of South Africa (1893-1914), and later of the Champaran and Gujarat satyagrahas gave him a messianic image.
129. *Report on the Punjab Disturbances*, April 1919; Govt. of Bihar and Orissa, Pol. (Special) Dept., File 355 of 1919.
130. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 10 May 1920; Home (Pol.) Deposit, June 1920, No. 18.
131. *Report on the Punjab Disturbances*, op. cit.
132. *An Autobiography*, p. 298.
133. Ibid.
134. Proceedings of the Meeting, 20-1 April 1919, Appendix.
135. Ibid., para VI. The U.P. Congress Committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru passed a similar resolution.
136. H.F. Owen, 'Non-cooperation, 1920-22', S. Ray (ed.), *Gandhi, India and the World*, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 173.
137. Welcome Address of Swami Shraddhanand, the local Secretary, Amritsar Congress, *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., Vol. 7, p. 463.
138. 12 July 1920.
139. P.M. Mehta, a Congress leader, had once declared in the Subjects Committee in Madras that the 'demonstrative part of the Congress' was quite as important as 'the business aspect'.
140. *Autobiography*, first Indian edition, New Delhi, 1962, p. 65. M. Brecher (Nehru, *A Political Biography*, London, 1959, pp. 66-7) says that in the Amritsar Congress itself Gandhi emerged as the 'dominant figure'. Durga Das (op. cit., p. 63) thinks that Gandhi's emergence on the Indian political scene began with his leadership of a nationwide agitation against the Rowlatt Act in 1919.
141. Brown, op. cit., p. 281. Gandhi's leadership became absolute because he organized a Congress enquiry in the Punjab in late 1919, presided over the Khilafat conference in Delhi, successfully drafted the new constitution of the Congress and became the editor of two weeklies, *Navajivan* and *Young India* from October 1919. A government publication, *India 1919*, dealing with the emergence of Gandhi in Indian politics referred to his Tolstoyan ideas and complete selflessness, the reverence he commanded, and his work among the Indians in South Africa. He had

admirers in many religions, and he was regarded with reverence, even 'adoration'.

According to Durga Das, Gandhi's meteoric rise to unrivalled leadership received a powerful impetus from the popular fervour at the resignation of Sankaran Nair from the Viceroy's Executive Council and Tagore's renunciation of his knighthood (op. cit., p. 64).

Partha Chatterjee says that Gandhi came to the centre of the national politics as he knew how to get in touch with the common people, 'to move the peasantry, to make them act politically against the colonial rulers' ('Will the Real Mr. Gandhi please stand up?', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 15-21 Jan. 1956). Even those like the Nehrus who did not like the growth of religious element in India politics, were dazzled by Gandhi's charisma.

142. Kaushik, op. cit., p. 31.
143. *The Searchlight*, 25 July 1920.
144. Koor to M.M. Chotani, 12 May 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, June 1920, No. 112.
145. Ibid. Koor wanted the Khilafat movement to continue on the previous lines and not under the leadership of Gandhi.
146. The Afghan delegation in India was spreading rumours, e.g. that soldiers deserting the Indian army would be rewarded.
147. *Hijrat* means emigrating from one's country to avoid continuous repression.
148. Harcourt Butler to Chelmsford, 27 May 1920; Chelmsford Papers, Vol. 24, Roll 11, No. 628, p. 530, NMML.
149. H.N. Mitra, op. cit., p. 57.
150. R.C. Majumdar (ed.), op cit., p. 331.
151. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 5 July 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, July 1920, No. 104.
152. Polak to C.F. Andrews, 7 July 1920; Banarsi Das Chaturvedi Papers, I/B-497, NAI.
153. Ibid.
154. Weekly Report, D.C.I., 12 July 1920; Home Pol. Deposit, July 1920, No. 104.
155. Ibid. But for 'the fuss made about the matter in the newspapers no one would do here anything about the Khilafat movement'.
156. Ibid. Gandhi and Shaukat Ali, however, claimed that non-cooperation was perfectly constitutional since it was non-violent. *The Searchlight* Patna, 15 Aug. 1920.
157. *The Englishman*, 20 July 1920.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. 27 July 1920.
161. Secretary, Govt. of India, to Local Governments, 31 July 1920; Home Pol. B, Aug. 1920, No. 338 and telegram.
162. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 31 July 1920.
163. Ibid.
164. Ibid. Also *Young India*.

165. *The Englishman*, 3 Aug. 1920.
166. Ibid. Also, Chief Secretary, Bengal to Secretary, Govt. of India, 3 Aug. 1920; Home Pol. B, Aug. 1920, Nos. 538-67. About 6,000 attended the Town Hall meeting. One person returned his recruit's certificate, one refused the invitation to a *Durbar* and another to the Governor's garden party.
167. *Bengalee*, 3 August 1920.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.
170. There was partial hartal in Rohtak, Karnal, Montgomery, Gujranwala, Gujarat and Jalandhar. But Ambala, Sialkot, Lyalpur and a few other towns had no hartal.
171. Home Pol. B, Aug. 1920, 538-67. On 26 August 1920, S. Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar said on behalf of the Madras PCC that the adoption of a policy of non-cooperation was highly essential.
172. Home Pol. B, Govt. of India, Aug. 1920, 538-67, NAI.
173. Home Pol. B, Govt. of India, Aug. 1920, Nos. 538-67. Only 22 shops closed on the main road at Patna.
174. *Mussalman*, 6 Aug. 1920. In Bihar Nurul Hasan resigned his seat in the local Legislative Council; at Chatgaon (Bengal), Maulvi Muhammad Rajam Ali resigned his honorary magistrateship and returned his *Durbar* medal; at Agra Syed Ali Nabi renounced his title of Khan Bahadur.
175. Ibid.
176. *Zamana.*, 5 Aug. 1920.
177. *Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council*, April to Sept. 1920, Vol. LIX, pp. 4-5.
178. Khaparde, Diary, 1920, NAI.
179. Banarsidas Collections, op. cit.
180. Khaparde, op. cit., 1920 Gandhi often acted as a dictator and Khaparde was afraid that he might wreck the Congress.
181. H. Butler to William Vincent, 8 Sept. 1920; Home Pol. B, Sept. 1920, No. 355.
182. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 304.
183. He feared a repetition of the Surat split.
184. AICC papers (supplementary), F.No. 18, 1920, NMML. It also denounced the government's failure in protecting innocent lives and in punishing the guilty officers. Also see Resolutions passed by the I.N. Congress, 4-8 Sept., Calcutta, 1920, *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., Vol. 7, Book 6, p. 581.
185. *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., Vol. 7, Book 6, p. 583.
186. Brown, op. cit., p. 228.
187. Ibid., p. 229.
188. Gandhi got 1,855 votes (Bihar 184, Punjab 254, UP 259, Bengal 551, Bombay 243), while B.C. Pal's amendment got 873 (Madras 135, Bengal 395, Bombay 93 and Punjab 92) only; *Young India*, 15 Sept. 1920.
189. R.C. Majumdar (ed.), op. cit., p. 335.
190. Quoted in Mushir-ul-Hasan; *Nationalist Muslim Politics*, (New Delhi, 1979), p. 143.

191. *The Searchlight*, 21 November 1920.
192. 22 Oct. 1920, NMML.
193. Ibid.
194. 35th Indian National Congress, Nagpur Session, *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., Vol. 7, Book 7, p. 659.
195. *India*, op. cit., p. 75. For Gandhi the situation was favourable at the Nagpur Congress. The Council elections were over and those not in favour of boycott stood aloof. The rest in the Congress were opposed to the government. (Mitra, op. cit., p. 58). In fact, non-cooperation with an oppressive government was not an entirely new concept in India. This had been taken recourse to after the partition of Bengal (1905).
196. Ibid., p. 76. This session marked a watershed in the history of the Congress.
197. Brown, op. cit., p. 298.
198. Gopal Krishna, 'The Development of the Indian National Congress as a Mass Organisation, 1918-23', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, May 1966, pp. 429-30.
199. J.S. Sharma, *India's Struggle for Freedom*, New Delhi, 1962, Vol. III, P. 814.
200. Registers, AICC files, 1920, No. 5.
201. *The Searchlight*, 17 Sept. 1920, p. 8.
202. Presidential speech, *Encyclopaedia*, op. cit., Vol. 7, Book 7, pp. 627-29.
203. Resolution VIII, ibid., p. 664.
204. J.S. Sharma, op. cit., p. 92.
205. Special Branch Officer's report, 28 March 1921, File No. 39, Pol. Special Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921; Patna Archives (henceforth P.A.).
206. Special Branch Officer's report, 27 March 1921, Pol. Spl. File No. 39 of 1921, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921; P.A. Gopabandhu Das, Rajendra Prasad and Swami Vishwanand accompanied Gandhi.
207. Report on Cloth Boycott Movement in Bihar, File No. 400 of 1921. Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
208. 3rd report on Gandhi's visit to Cuttack, 24 March 1921, File No. 39, Pol. Special Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
209. Special Branch report, 28 March 1921, File No. 39 of 1921, Pol. Special Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921; P.A.
210. Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 43.
211. A Special Branch report, 6 Feb. 1921, File No. 44, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
212. Brown, op. cit., p. 277.
213. S. Gopal, op. cit., p. 48.
214. File No. 80, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
215. Stephen Henningham, *Peasant Movements in Colonial India 1917-42*, Canberra, 1982, pp. 70-89. The full name was Vishwa Bharan Prasad; born at Sughar in the Saran district; a Kayastha; was associated with M.M. Malaviya; impressed by Gandhi's impact in Champaran, 1917-8; turned a *sanyasi*; brought consciousness among the small peasants.
216. Secy. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India to Chief Secy., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, D.O. No. 985, 6 June 1921; File No. 80 of 1921, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa.

217. Note by Intelligence Branch, C.I.D., Bengal, NAI. In Bihar Ishwar Das and Kripa Baba of Chapra, Jagdishwaranand of Monghyr, Baijnath Das Brahmachari of Bhagalpur and Swami Sahajanand of Sahabad — all in Bihar, and Kripa Das of Chandpur (Bengal) were actively associated with the Non-cooperation Movement. Bihar & Orissa Abstract, 3 Sept. 1921; NAI.
218. Punjab Civil Secretariat to Secy., Home Dept., Govt. of India, 20 July 1921, NAI.
219. Abstract, Criminal Intelligence Report, No. 21, 4 June 1921, para 258.
220. He was bitterly anti-British and even insulted Europeans personally.
221. Lambert to S.P. O'Donnel, 15 Nov. 1921, D.O. No. 319-D, 3052, Pol; NAI.
222. Ibid. The leading lights were Bharati Krishna Tirth, the sole descendant of the Shankaracharya of Sharda Pith; Swami Bhaskar Tirth of Sharda Pith; Amar Das of Bela (Sindh); Vicharanand Saraswati of the Punjab; Satyanand of Patiala; Ram Sundar Sharma of Bengal; Kumaranand of Madras; Atmanand Saraswati of CP; Viraktanand (Bombay); Jagadishwaranand Bharati (Hardwar); Swami Satyadeva (Allahabad); Swami Parmanand (Lucknow); Swami S. Narayan (Lucknow); Swami Parmanand Giri (Rishikesh); Swami Ramchandra (Hardwar); Swami Ambaranand (Delhi); Satyanand Saraswati (Bihar); Swami Govindanand (Karachi).
223. The Deoband Islamic School of UP played a significant role as the Arya Samaj centres did.
224. Special Branch report, 28 March 1921, File No. 39, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921. In one of his meetings in Orissa Gandhi told the people that they should 'either mend or end this government' in case they wanted to protect the cows. If they left the question of cow protection to the Muslims alone, he said, they would assist them on this issue for they were not ungrateful people. Just as he was living with the Ali brothers, they should live with their Muslim brethren.
225. Memo, R.S.F. Macref, DIG to Bihar Govt., 9 Feb. 1921, No. 1107-9, S.B., File No. 44, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
226. File No. 144, Pol. Special Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921. The tribals of Bihar had a long history of freedom struggle: The Kol Insurrection of 1831-2; the Bhumij Revolt (1832-3); the Santal Insurrection (1855-6) and the Birsa movement (1895-1901). The Oraons had been restless during the First World War, with strong German sympathies. Lately, the Tana Bhagat Movement was going on.
227. H.D. Craik, Home Dept., Govt. of India to Secretary, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, D.O. No. 1060, 20 June 1921, File No. 144, Pol. Special, File No. 144, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921. The Ali Brothers later tendered a public apology.
228. Ibid.
229. Ibid.
230. Non-cooperation, 2nd report on Gandhi's visit to Cuttack, 23 March 1921, File No. 39, Pol. Special Dept., Government of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
231. Cipher telegram, 8 March 1921, Patna to Home Dept., Govt. of India & G.O.C., Cal., File No. 115, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921. The Santhals in

the Reserve Force at Purnea, however, did not resign their posts due to the persuasion of Subedar Bhairo Manjhi.

232. *An Indian Peasant Movement, 1927-42*, Chicago, 1961, p. 62. Also see *Young India*, III, New Series, 18 May 1921.
233. Ajmer, Lucknow, Nagpur, Madras and Allahabad saw similar bonfires.
234. Other serious outbreaks were at Maligaon, Giridih, Aligarh and Bombay. In Malabar the non-cooperation propaganda had been spreading since Feb. 1921. Tarachand, *The History of the Freedom Movement in India*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 496. Also, Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 220.
235. Ibid.
236. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p. 190.
237. C.I.D. report from Madras, No. 90C/S. F. 363A, 22 June 1921; NAI.
238. Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 220.
239. In pursuance of the Nagpur resolution the Working Committee met almost once a month throughout 1921. The first meeting of the AICC took place at Nagpur to elect the Working Committee which met in Calcutta on 31 Jan. 1921. Next it met at Bezwada on 31 March and 1 April side by side with the AICC meeting. The AICC met in Bombay from 28 to 30 July.
240. Report on a meeting held at Biharsharif, 13 Aug. 1921; File No. 410, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921. At Aurangabad he warned the Hindus not to interfere with the Muslims during the Bakri Id (Report on the Movement of Gandhi, Gaya, 14 Aug. 1921, ibid.). He was shocked to see overlaid cows and buffaloes.
241. D.O., E.L. Hammond to S.P. O'Donnel, 3 Dec. 1921, No. 4538-C, File No. 411, Serial 1-5, Home Pol., 1921; NAI.
242. D.O., H.D. Craik to all provincial governments, No. 568, 3 Sept. 1921, NAI.
243. Note to William Vincent, 9 Oct. 1921; NAI. The manifesto published on 6 Oct. 1921 and signed by Gandhi, A.K. Azad, Ajmal Khan, Lajpat Rai, Motilal, Sarojini Naidu, N.C. Kelkar, V.J. Patel, Vallabhbhai Patel, M.R. Jayakar, Jawaharlal, M.A. Ansari, C. Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad said that it was 'the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to or remaining in the employment of the Government, whether in the civil or the military department.' It was 'contrary to national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian, and more especially as a soldier, under a system of Government, which has brought about India's economic, moral and political degradation and which has used the soldiery and the police for repressing national aspirations, as, for instance, at the time of the Rowlatt Act agitation, and which has used the soldiery for crushing the liberty of the Arabs, the Egyptians, the Turks and other nations who have done no harm to India.'
244. Ibid.
245. Associated Press Telegram, Bombay, 23 Nov. 1921. Gandhi called himself the 'Grateful comrade' of his co-workers.
246. Taunk, op. cit., p. 99.
247. Ibid., p. 100, *The Indian Annual Register* (1922) called this incident a mini Jallianwala Bagh tragedy.

248. Chief Secretary, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa to Secretary, Home Dept., Govt. of India, D.O. No. 459-C, 15 March 1921, File No. 144, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
249. H.D. Craik (Home Dept., Govt. of India) to Chief Secy., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, D.O. No. 1060, 20 June 1921, File No. 144, Pol. Spl., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1921.
250. Ibid.
251. Ibid.
252. Ibid.
253. *The Searchlight*, 30 Oct. 1921.
254. *Young India*, 6 Oct. 1921.
255. Extract, Report of the Sindh C.I.D., 12 Nov. 1921; NAI. In the early 17th century the first English factory had been set up there and now the raj might end in this area.
256. Viceroy (Home Dept.) to Secy. of State for India, telegram No. 1249, 25 Nov. 1921.
257. Hammond, Chief Secy., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa to Secy., Home Dept., Govt. of India, 10 Dec. 1921; NAI.
258. D.O., Hammond to S.P. O'Donnel, No. 4538-C, Patna, 3 Dec. 1921, File No. 44, serial 1-5, Home Pol. Dept., 1923; NAI.
259. Ibid.
260. Hammond to Commissioners & District Officers, enclosure, *ibid.*
261. Ibid.
262. Unlike the previous sessions, in this session, no chairs were provided for the delegates, nor were the delegates in European dress. (N.S. Hardiker, 'When I felt like Rip Van Winkle', *1921 Movement Reminiscences*, op. cit., p. 106.) All decorations were in khadi. Thousands poured into Ahmedabad to have a glimpse of the Mahatma and to see how the Congress worked.

By now, over 20,000 civil resisters were in jail. Lajpat Rai, C.R. Das, Abul Kalam Azad and thousands of other volunteers in all parts of India were arrested because the government was determined to prevent a general hartal on 24 December, the day of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta. Even Das's wife, his widowed sister and niece were arrested. Soon Motilal and Jawaharlal were sentenced to six months imprisonment. At this time, Jawaharlal was trying to induct tenant power into the movement. (S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, p. 48.)
263. *Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, Vol. 8, p. 36.
264. Ibid., p. 40
265. Murphy to Hammond, 11 Jan. 1922, File No. 38, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922.
266. Special Branch report, 28 Feb. 1922, File No. 81, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922; P.A. The jails of Balasore, Patna and Sasaram were specially affected.
267. Report on case No. 4 of 24 Jan. 1922, File No. 81, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922; P.A. Report to S.P. Hazaribagh, File No. 38, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922.

268. Police D.I.G.'s diary, 13 July 1922, File No. 38, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922.
269. Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 222.
270. Durga Das, op. cit., p. 100.
271. Ibid. Gandhi had also got reports of violence from Bareilly (UP).
272. Shahid Amin, 'Waiting for the Mahatma', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay, 5-11 Feb. 1984, p. 42.
273. Ibid. The name Gandhi and the word swaraj had got deeper meanings in the rural areas. He was considered 'the saviour of India, a divine figure'.
274. J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 81.
275. *The Harijan*, Vol. VI, 1938; Joan Bondurant (ed.), *M.K. Gandhi and Non-cooperation*, New York & London, 1973, p. 120.
276. *Autobiography*, p. 81. 'Civil resistance stopped and non-cooperation wilted away' and after 'months of strain and anxiety the government breathed again'.
277. Gopal, *Biography*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 64. Even Lajpat Rai criticized Gandhi's action.
278. Brown, op. cit., p. 342. The rift in the Congress later led to the birth of the Swaraj Party.
279. Individual civil disobedience was defined as 'disobedience of Orders or laws by a single individual or a group of individuals'. An individual, for example, by entering a prohibited public meeting was taking recourse to such disobedience.
280. Report on the situation in the N.W.F. province for the first half of March 1922.
281. Telegram, Chief Secretary, Bihar to D.M.s, 10 Feb. 1922, File No. 103, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922, p. 7.
282. W. Johnston to Commissioner, Patna, 26 Feb. 1922, File No. 81, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922. Also, Shahabad report on Berhampur mela, 1 March 1922, File No. 81, Pol. Special, Govt. of Bihar and Orissa, 1922.
283. Louis Fischer, *Gandhi : His Message to the World*, New York, 1962, pp. 100-01.
284. Acting Chief Secretary, Madras Government to Secretary, Home Dept., Govt. of India, 16 March 1922.
285. Fortnightly Memo No. 64 on the internal situation in Ajmer-Merwara for the period ending 15 March 1922; NAI.
286. Report on the situation in the Punjab for the fortnight ending 15 March 1922; NAI.
287. Ibid.
288. According to Sitaramayya (op. cit., p. 237) he was arrested on 13 March.
289. Secretary, Govt. of Bombay, Pol. Special to Secretary, Govt. of India, Home Dept., 18 March 1922, Telegram P; NAI. A meeting at Patna, however, congratulated Gandhi on his arrest. (A Special Branch report, 15 March 1922, File No. 189, Pol. Special Dept., Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922.) Nafiz Abdul Ghani said that it was a shame that the people were playing *abir* (coloured powder) in the holi festival and wore foreign clothes when Gandhi was in jail. Those who considered Gandhi an

incarnation of God, were shocked by his arrest, while others thought that this would hasten the attainment of swaraj. Dhanraj Sharma said that Gandhi's arrest was the height of oppression and Ramchandra Dwivedi considered it 'the imprisonment of 33 crores of Indians'. (Memo No. 483/84, report from D.S.P. Patna City, 21 March 1922, Pol. Special, File No. 189, Govt. of Bihar & Orissa, 1922.)

In another meeting at Patna the people expressed a sense of gratitude to Gandhi who stood as 'an embodiment of our nation's aspiration and sacrifice for the invaluable service to the country'. (Hammond to O'Donnell, Secy., Home Dept., Govt. of India, 2 April 1922, D.O. No. 1362 C.)

290. These were entitled 'Tampering with Loyalty'; 'The Puzzle and its Solution' and 'Shaking the Manes'. In the last, Gandhi had written, 'The rice-eating puny millions of India seem to have resolved upon achieving their own destiny without any further tutelage and without arms. In Lokmanya's language, it is their 'birthright' and they will have it, in spite of the 'hard fire'. Earlier Lord Birkenhead had reminded Indians of Britain's 'hard fire'.
291. A Liberal League meeting at Lucknow protested against Gandhi's conviction, but a government officer was naive enough to report that Gandhism was on the wane and Hindu-Muslim unity, 'never more than superficial', was 'failing to stand the test of practical experience'. (Lambert to O'Donnell, Secy., Home Dept., Govt. of India, 30 March 1922, D.O. No. 716; NAI.)
292. Report on the Political situation in the Punjab for the fortnight ending 31 March 1922; NAI.
293. J. Crerar to O'Donnell, 4 April 1922, D.O. No. S-D-1, p. 18.
294. Those ignoring this directive would be fined.
295. B.R. Nanda, *Gokhale, Gandhi and the Nehrus*, 1974, p. 62.
296. Shankerlal Banker, 'In Retrospect', *1921 Movement Reminiscences*, p. 36. This 'first unarmed revolt' of the world actually ended in March 1922, even though it lingered on till 1924.
297. Willingdon to Vincent, 1 July 1922; Home Pol. Dept., 1922, No. 418 & K.W.
298. R.R. Diwakar, 'Seeds Were Sown', *1921 Movement Reminiscences*, p. 76.
299. *Harijan*, Vol. VIII, 1940, in J. Bondurant (ed.), p. 132.
300. Ibid.
301. Brown, op. cit., p. 343.
302. Ibid.

Chapter II

The Swarajist Interlude

B.R. Nanda

THE BIRTH OF THE Swaraj Party was part of the critical response in the Indian National Congress to Gandhi's revocation of civil disobedience after the Chauri Chaura tragedy. His decision bewildered even his closest colleagues. They were at a loss to understand why a riot in an obscure village in the United Provinces necessitated the suspension of the struggle in the whole country. Even Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's devoted secretary, confessed that the news had 'unhinged' him.¹ The Nehrus, father and son, who were in Lucknow jail, were furious; Jawaharlal voiced his feelings in a letter which Gandhi described as a freezing dose'.² C.R. Das, who was in Alipore jail, lamented that Gandhi was repeatedly 'bungling';³ his wife, Basanti Devi, questioned the authority of the central organization of the Congress to halt the struggle in Bengal. 'I understand from my husband', she wrote to Gandhi, 'that every province has the right to deal with provincial questions without interference from the Congress Working Committee.'⁴

Gandhi's arguments for the withdrawal of civil disobedience left many Congressmen unconvinced. Was the Congress a political body, they asked, or a testing ground for the experiments of a mahatma? These doubts were pungently expressed in a letter which Lajpat Rai, the most prominent Congress leader of the Punjab, sent from prison to his colleagues in the Congress Working Committee. He described Gandhi as 'one of the greatest of men of all ages, all times and all countries. Yet that is exactly the reason why we have to swallow the bitter pill of ignominious defeat today.'⁵

The programme which Gandhi recommended before his arrest — promotion of khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability — seemed uninspiring to those who were burning to mount a final assault on British imperialism. There were signs of confusion and demoralization in the Congress ranks after Gandhi's imprisonment. In June 1922 the All-India Congress Committee

appointed a committee to tour the country to ascertain how far the people were ready for the resumption of civil disobedience. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee came to the conclusion that the atmosphere was not propitious for civil disobedience on a large scale, but provincial Congress committees could be authorized, in the light of the local situation, to defy particular laws or refuse to pay obnoxious taxes. On the boycott of councils, which had already become the most contentious issue, the committee was sharply divided: Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and V.J. Patel were for revoking the boycott, while C. Rajagopalachari, Dr Ansari and Kasturi Ranga Iyengar were for continuing it.⁶

At the Calcutta Congress, which approved Gandhi's programme of non-violent non-cooperation in September 1920, the stiffest opposition had been to the boycott of legislatures. The reasons for this are not far to seek. For the leaders of the Indian National Congress, ever since its inception, it had been axiomatic that the transition from a foreign and bureaucratic regime to an Indian and democratic polity would come through elected legislatures with a progressively wider base and larger powers.⁷ A seat in a legislative council had long been an instant passport to honour and fame in Indian public life. Dadabhai Naoroji had been a member of the House of Commons; Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale had won their laurels in the Imperial Legislative Council; Tilak had been a member of the Bombay Council, and shortly before his death in August 1920, had launched a new party to contest the first general election under the Act of 1919.

In 1920, before Gandhi upset the apple-cart, most Congress leaders had had their eyes on the imminent election to the 'reformed councils'. At the Calcutta Congress there was hardly any eminent Congress leader, except Motilal Nehru, who supported the boycott of councils. But as recently as June 1920, even Motilal had been looking for suitable constituencies for himself and his son for contesting the election⁸ to the UP council. At the Calcutta Congress, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, B.C. Pal and Jinnah opposed the boycott of councils. C.R. Das and N.C. Kelkar waged a last-ditch battle against it; and even when they felt compelled to swim with the Gandhian tide, they remained unconvinced of the wisdom of the decision. It is not surprising that in 1922, as soon as it became obvious that the Non-cooperation Movement had collapsed, there should have been suggestions for withdrawal of the boycott of councils. Among the most ardent advocates of council-entry were Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das. They met with determined opposition from a strong section in the Congress to whom it was almost an act of sacrilege to tone down the non-cooperation programme, while its author was in jail. The issue was fiercely debated for five days at a meeting of the AICC

at Calcutta in November 1922, but no agreement could be reached, and the decision was left to the annual Congress session which was to be held at Gaya in December 1922.

The Gaya Congress was presided over by C.R. Das, the leader of the 'Pro-Changers' — as the advocates of council-entry came to be known. He pleaded for a change 'in the direction of our activities in certain respects for the very success of the very movement which we hold so dear'.⁹ He argued that council-entry was not a negation of the principle of non-cooperation but its extension to a new field. The councils set up by the British had to be mended, said Das, in a manner 'suitable to the attainment of Swaraj or to be ended completely'. Hitherto Congressmen had been boycotting the legislatures from outside; henceforth they would boycott them from within and more effectively: 'If we succeed in demolishing these Reformed Councils, you will find the whole nation astir . . .' C.R. Das was vigorously supported by Motilal Nehru, who, according to M.R. Jayakar, made a 'fighting speech . . . refreshing in its candour after two years of self-imposed silence and acquiescence'.¹⁰

At the Gaya Congress, the political logic of C.R. Das and Motilal had to contend with the sentiment of the majority of the Congress delegates — 'No-Changers' as they came to be known — in whose eyes any deviation from the programme prescribed by the mahatma was an act of betrayal. Their chief spokesman was C. Rajagopalachari, who moved a resolution exhorting Congressmen neither to vote nor to seek election to the councils. S. Srinivasa Iyengar moved an amendment to this resolution proposing that the electors should be advised to vote for Congressmen, who would not, however, take their seats in the Councils. This amendment was accepted by Motilal Nehru as a compromise on behalf of the Pro-Changers, but it was rejected. The original resolution moved by C. Rajagopalachari was carried by 1,740 votes against 880.

Notwithstanding the recommendation of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, the Gaya Congress called for the continuance of the 'triple boycott' of courts, schools and councils and for preparations for civil disobedience. This was an ignominious defeat for the Pro-Changers, and especially for C.R. Das, the president of the Congress session; he had failed to carry with him even the majority of delegates from Bengal.

1. The Birth of the Swaraj Party

The Pro-Changers led by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru took up the gauntlet; they decided to defy the verdict of the Gaya Congress. On 31 December 1922, at a meeting held at the Gaya residence of the Maharaja of Tikari — a client of Motilal Nehru — it was decided to form a new

party, the 'Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party', with C.R. Das as its leader, and Motilal Nehru, B.N. Sasmal, V.J. Patel and Khaliq-uz-zaman as secretaries.¹¹ The party accepted the creed of the Congress, viz., the attainment of swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means, and the principle of non-violent non-cooperation. The prospects for the new party did not look too bright. One of its sponsors, M.R. Jayakar, noted in his diary on 31 December 1922, 'Not sure, whether the affair will go through.' Seven weeks later, on 20 February 1923, a 'general meeting' of the party was held at Allahabad. It changed the name of the party to 'Swarajya Party', and approved its constitution and programme.¹² Any one who was a member of any Congress organization in India, subscribed to the constitution and programme of the new party, and paid Rs 3 per annum, could become a member. A General Council was set up, consisting of such members of the AICC as were members of the Swarajya Party, and of two members elected by the Swarajya Party of each province. The Executive Committee of the party was to include the president, the general secretary, and seven persons nominated by the president from among the members of the General Council.

C.R. Das was elected president and Motilal Nehru general secretary. The political partnership between these two outstanding lawyers, who had sometimes figured as rival counsel in civil suits, was a great asset to the new party. The imaginative insight and emotional appeal of Das formed a perfect foil to the objectivity and down-to-earth empiricism of Motilal: these complementary qualities made them an excellent team. Such was their mutual confidence that each of them could, without prior consultation with the other, take his name for any statement or declaration.¹³ The burden of organizing the party, however, fell mostly on Motilal, who ran his one-man secretariat from Anand Bhawan, his house at Allahabad.

Soon after the general meeting of the party, provincial organizers were appointed for sixteen Congress provinces; among them were B.N. Sasmal for Bengal, T.R. Phookan for Assam, Hakim Ajmal Khan for Delhi, Kapil Dev Malaviya for UP, M.S. Aney for Berar, M.R. Jayakar for Bombay, N.C. Kelkar for Maharashtra, Ruchi Ram Sahni for the Punjab, Seth Govind Das, B.S. Moonje and Abhyankar for Central Provinces, A. Rangaswamy Iyengar and S. Satyamurti for Tamil Nadu.¹⁴

The goal of the party was defined as 'the attainment of Swarajya' but the 'immediate objective' was 'the speedy attainment of the full Dominion Status, that is securing of the right to frame a constitution, adopting such machinery and system as are most suited to the conditions of the country and to the genius of the people.'

The Swarajya Party subscribed to the Constructive Programme of the Congress pertaining to swadeshi, khadi, temperance, untouchability,

inter-communal unity, national education and arbitration courts. It promised to work for an 'Indian National Pact' to settle conflicting communal claims, to revive propaganda in foreign countries, to organize labour, and to cherish the idea of a 'Federation of Asiatic countries and nationalities'. All this was, however, mostly for the record. The real programme of the party, and indeed its *raison d'être*, was participation in the general election due in November 1923. It was stated in the party programme that the Swarajists

will, when they are elected, present on behalf of the country its legitimate demands as formulated by the Party. . . . If the demands are not granted [by the Government] to the satisfaction of the Party, occasions will then arise, for the elected members belonging to the Party, to adopt a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the Councils with a view to make Government through the Councils impossible, but before adopting such a policy the representatives of the Party in the Councils, will, if necessary, strengthen themselves by adding an express mandate of the electorates in this behalf.

The Swarajya Party had published its constitution and programme, but it could hardly begin its work while it was being continually harried by its No-Changer critics within the Congress organization. In February 1923 the All-India Congress Committee had ordered a truce between the two factions; for three months there was to be no propaganda in favour of council entry or against it. As the date for elections drew near, the Swarajists saw that the truce could only work against them. On 1 May 1923 Motilal Nehru struck a defiant note, and wrote to members of the AICC and the Provincial Congress Committees that his party 'will not desist from contesting the forthcoming elections'. 'Is this the time,' he asked, 'to wait and look on while the Moderates and the hangers-on of the Bureaucracy are putting forth strenuous efforts to give the country another three years of Government by a mock Parliament?'¹⁵ An immediate riposte came from C. Rajagopalachari, the leader of the No-Changers, calling upon the people to boycott the election. A head-on collision between the two factions seemed inevitable at the meeting of the AICC at Bombay in the last week of May 1923, but a compromise was reached: propaganda against council-entry was disallowed. Many No-Changers were unhappy at this decision. Six members of the Congress Working Committee, including C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Jamnalal Bajaj resigned, and a new Working Committee with Dr Ansari as President, Jawaharlal Nehru, T. Prakasam and Syed Mahmud as secretaries was constituted.

The Bombay compromise had not come too soon. It was essential for the Swarajists to protect their rear in the Congress as they went forward

for their electoral battle. A meeting of the General Council of the Swarajya Party took place on 27 May at Bombay, while the AICC was still in session, and laid down the procedure for the selection of candidates. The choice of candidates for the provincial councils was virtually left to the provincial parties, though it was subject to the approval of the central leadership. The candidates for the Legislative Assembly were, however, to be selected by the General Council of the party.¹⁶

Curiously enough, when the AICC met again at Nagpur in July 1923, the Pro-Changers tried to resile from the Bombay compromise. They carried a resolution by 80 to 67 votes in favour of holding a 'Special' plenary Congress session at Delhi in September 1923. Lajpat Rai, who was unable to attend the Delhi session, warned against the danger of a split which could be more serious than the Surat split of 1907. Luckily for the Swarajists, the Special Congress at Delhi was presided over by the sedate Abul Kalam Azad, who counselled moderation on both sides. The Delhi Congress did not reverse the decision taken by the AICC at Bombay in May, and permitted such 'Congressmen as had no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures' to exercise the right of vote as well as to offer themselves as candidates.

2. The 1923 Election

The Swarajya Party entered the electoral arena with some handicaps. The conflict with the No-Changers had been a serious distraction; it did not really end until after the Special Congress at Delhi, just two months before the election. There had not been enough time to organize the party on a sound footing; it could not draw upon the support of some of the most influential Congress leaders in various provinces, such as C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jamnalal Bajaj, who were confirmed No-Changers. The Swarajists did not have a good press; they had to contend with a lack of sympathy not only from European-owned newspapers, but from such nationalist papers as the *Bombay Chronicle*; it was easy to represent them as renegades who were back-sliding into the constitutionalism of the pre-Gandhi epoch. The narrow franchise made it impossible for the Swarajya Party to take a radical stance. In numerous constituencies, there were 'independent' candidates, particularly landlords, who counted on their personal influence and needed no party label. In his election manifesto in October 1923, Motilal took care to welcome 'the nationalist zamindars who intend contesting elections as comrades in arms provided they co-operate with the [Swarajya] Party.'

One inestimable advantage the Swarajists had: they could use the name of the Congress and the Mahatma, and denounce their opponents as the allies and collaborators of the British Raj. The Liberals, the Swarajists' chief opponents, were in any case a demoralized lot; they were

divided by personal jealousies rather than political differences; their party lacked a popular base; they had no leader to rival C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru in ability, organizing capacity, courage of conviction and national stature.

The Swarajists were returned in strength only to the Legislative Assembly and to two provincial councils, those of the Central Provinces and Bengal.¹⁷ In Bombay and UP, they were returned in considerable numbers, but they did not constitute the largest party. In Madras and Punjab, they were a tiny minority. There is no doubt, however, that the Swarajist performance at the elections came as a shock both to the Moderates and to the government. The Moderates suffered some sensational defeats. In Calcutta the veteran Surendranath Banerjea was beaten by B.C. Roy, an 'amiable doctor whose name was known chiefly to his numerous patients'.¹⁸ C.Y. Chintamani, R.P. Paranjpye, S.R. Das, Seshagiri Aiyar, all prominent Liberals, were humbled by their Swarajist rivals. However, while the Swarajists were able to defeat the Liberals, they could not dislodge 'independent' candidates, mostly rich landlords enjoying personal influence in rural constituencies which had really not been exposed to sustained nationalist propaganda.

'A notable victory', this was how Lord Reading, the viceroy, described the Swarajists' electoral performance in a letter to the Secretary of State, Viscount Peel, on 14 December 1923.¹⁹ 'It is quite clear', he wrote, 'that the Swarajists have done exceptionally well. They have completely routed the Liberals and Moderates in most contests and will be a formidable opposition to the Government both in the provincial councils and the Central Legislature.' The only redeeming feature of the situation, from Reading's point of view, was that the Swarajist success was a vindication of the revolt against Gandhi by 'Das & Co.' 'It remains to be seen', he added, 'whether the Gandhi wing of the Congress will acquiesce . . . in the present position and whether the result may not be to split up the Congress into two wings.'

Only in two provinces, Central Provinces and Bengal, could the Swarajya Party try to fulfil the undertaking in its election manifesto — to wreck the 'reformed' legislatures from within. In the Legislative Council of the Central Provinces and Berar the party had won 41 out of 54 seats open to it, thus gaining a clear majority in a council of 73 members (which included 19 nominated and official members). Sir Frank Sly, the governor, invited B.S. Moonje, the leader of the Swarajya Party in the provincial legislature, to form a ministry. Moonje declined. The governor then appointed two ministers, S.M. Chitnavis, a Liberal member from Nagpur, and Syed Hifazat Ali, a little-known pleader from Khandwa. The Swarajists retaliated by postponing bills relating to the 'Reserved' and 'Transferred' departments. On 18 January 1924, they carried

a vote of no-confidence in the ministers. They refused all the supplies which were in their power to refuse, and fixed the ministers' salaries at the farcical figure of Rs 2 per year. The governor was obliged to bring into operation the emergency powers conferred upon him by the Reforms Act, and to restore the grants rejected by the Council. In March 1924, the ministers resigned, and the governor took over the administration of the 'Transferred' departments.

In the Bengal Council, the Swarajya Party led by C.R. Das, though the largest and most compact group, did not command an absolute majority. It had a strength of 47 in a House of 114 members, but could generally count upon the support of the Independent Nationalist Party led by B. Chakrabarty, which, by March 1924, had 19 members. The government bloc of 26 officials and nominated members in the Council was loyally supported by 17 elected European members.

Soon after the results of the election were known, Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, invited C.R. Das, as the leader of the largest party, to form a ministry. Das declined on the ground that the members of his party were 'pledged to do everything in their power by using the legal right granted under the Reforms Act to put an end to the system of dyarchy. This duty they cannot discharge if they take office.'²⁰

One of the most interesting features of the constitutional crisis in Bengal at this time was that it developed into a tug-of-war between C.R. Das and Lytton.²¹ Lytton was determined to frustrate the avowed Swarajist design of wrecking dyarchy. He appointed three ministers, S. Mallik, Fazlul Haq and A.K. Ghuznavi. He conferred with individual councillors, and, against the advice of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, allowed himself to be involved in secret negotiations and intrigues to muster a majority for the ministers whom he had appointed.

C.R. Das countered Lytton with great vigour, skill and tenacity. As a result of an election petition in the Calcutta High Court, one of the ministers, S. Mallik, was unseated, and when he contested in a bye-election, he was defeated. The Swarajists stayed away from the council when the governor came to inaugurate the session. They engaged Evan Cotton, the President of the Council, in a continual battle, on points of procedure; they set up a barrage of questions to embarrass the ministers; they opposed requests for grants on behalf of 'Reserved' as well as 'Transferred' departments.

C.R. Das knew that his party could not do without the support of some at least of the Muslim members in the legislative council. His generous deal for the Muslim community in Bengal came to be known as the Bengal Pact. It provided for representation in the Bengal Council for the two communities on population basis, and for 60 per cent seats in

elected local bodies for the majority community in each district. As for government posts, 80 per cent were to be reserved for Muslims until they secured 55 per cent of the posts. The Bengal Pact was not accepted by the Coconada Congress in December 1923, but it won Das the enthusiastic support of the Muslim intelligentsia; quite one-third of the Swarajist members of the Bengal Council were Muslims. British officials, egged on by the governor, joined hands with the two Muslim ministers and tried to detach some of the Muslim members of the Swarajya Party.

In March 1924, the Swarajya Party carried a resolution in the Bengal Council reducing the ministers salaries to Re 1 per annum, by 63 votes against 62. The ministers, however, continued to serve until another vote came to be taken. Once again the voting went in the Swarajists' favour by 68 to 66, and the ministers had to resign. The governor prorogued the Council. It was not to meet again until 1925. Lytton had virtually to suspend the constitution.

Das had won in his contest with Lytton, but the strain had been too much for him. Many years later, Dr B.C. Roy recalled that, when Motilal Nehru came to Calcutta, Das recited his exploits and exclaimed: 'Motilal in Bengal, Dyarchy is dead.' 'Yes, Chitta,' Motilal replied, 'Dyarchy is dead, but it has been a costly death.' C.R. Das passed away in June 1925.²²

3. Confrontation With the Government

Before the general election, the leaders of the Swarajya Party had declared that in provinces where it was returned in a minority, its members would not take their seats in the councils except when it was necessary to prevent them from being declared vacant, or when there was an opportunity for effectively obstructing or overthrowing a ministry. This rule was not enforced after the election; the Swarajist parties of Madras and the Punjab protested that abstention from the Legislative Council was unnecessary, inexpedient and likely to lead to the disintegration of the party. Obviously, in provinces where they were in a minority, the Swarajists could not pursue a policy of 'uniform and continuous and consistent obstruction', all they could do was to try, in co-operation with other groups, to seek opportunities of thwarting or exposing the Treasury Benches.

In Assam the Swarajist group had only eight members, but it was able to carry a resolution in March 1924 in favour of full Responsible Government in Assam.²³ In the Bihar Legislative Council, even though the Swarajya Party had only 12 members in a house of 103, resolutions were passed urging the introduction of the *charkha* (spinning wheel) in schools and the release of all political prisoners in the province. In the United Provinces, attempts by the Swarajya Party to form a coalition

with certain other groups to oppose the government foundered on the voting of demands during the budget discussion.²⁴

In the Bombay Council M.R. Jayakar, who was leading his compact group of 28 Swarajists in a house of 111 members, occasionally obtained the support of the non-Brahmin and Muslim members, but with results which were unpredictable. For example, the Muslim members voted for the release of Hasrat Mohani, the Khilafat leader, but opposed the removal of the ban on the re-entry into India of B.G. Horniman, a former editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*.²⁵ A resolution recommending an increase in the salaries of teachers in primary schools could not be carried for lack of adequate support from the non-Brahmin and Muslim blocs.²⁶

In Madras the Swarajists numbered only 11 in a 127-member council. The Justice Party with 44 members was the largest party and formed a ministry. The Swarajists, led by the ebullient S. Satyamurti, joined hands with the opponents of the ministerial group to form the United Nationalist Party. Satyamurti knew how to draw the limelight on his party and on himself by reeling off 'supplementaries' during the question hour, raising procedural issues and giving notices of one adjournment motion after another. All this had, of course, a certain propaganda value; the British officials and the Justice Party ministers were sometimes subjected to criticism and embarrassment, but it made no real difference to the working of the administration in the province. In March 1924, when Satyamurti proposed a cut, on political grounds, of Rs 2 lakhs from a budget grant of Rs 3.3 lakhs for the staff and household of the Governor of Madras, the motion was lost; only three Swarajists voted for it, 23 United Nationalists abstained from voting, and the great majority of the members opposed it.²⁷

The real confrontation between the Government of India and the Swarajya Party, as the viceroy had foreseen, took place in the Legislative Assembly. The members were sworn in on 30 January 1924. On the following day the viceroy addressed both houses of the legislature. On 1 February the regular session commenced. The Swarajya Party with its 45 members constituted the largest party in the Assembly. The official bloc of senior civil servants and government nominees had nearly the same strength. It was clear that unless the Swarajists secured the support of some other elected members, they would not be able to make any impact on the Assembly.

Within a week of the commencement of the Assembly session came the miracle — the formation of the Nationalist Party with some 75 members. Those who helped in this consummation included Malaviya, Jinnah, Rangachariar and some younger members of the Swarajya Party such as Dewan Chamanlall and T.C. Goswami. The Nationalist Party

decided that immediate constitutional advance should be demanded in the Assembly, and if the government failed to make a satisfactory response, the Nationalist Party should initiate a policy of obstruction.

On 5 February 1924 a non-Swarajist member, Rangachariar, moved a resolution urging the Governor-General-in-Council to take steps to revise the Government of India Act in such a manner as to secure for India provincial autonomy in the provinces and full Dominion Status within the British Empire. More important than this resolution was an amendment moved by Motilal Nehru, which received the support of the Nationalist Party. It called for a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme for the establishment of 'full Responsible Government' in India, which was to be approved by a newly elected Legislative Assembly, and then by the British Parliament for being embodied in a statute.

Motilal Nehru acknowledged that he had toned down his amendment to meet the wishes of the non-Swarajist members of the Assembly, who did not belong to his party. He claimed the right of self-determination for the Indian people. He questioned the authority of the British Parliament, 'an extraneous authority' to determine the manner, the measure and the time of India's advance towards nationhood. This was Motilal's maiden speech. He was logical, persuasive, eloquent but remarkably restrained:

Sir, we have come here to offer our co-operation, Non-cooperators as we are, if you will care to cooperate with us. . . . If you agree to have it, we are your men; if you do not, we shall, like men, stand upon our rights and continue to be non-cooperators. . . . We have come to ask you to meet us so that we may put our heads together . . . and then to come to some conclusion.²⁸

Motilal's conciliatory tone may have been dictated by the need to carry with him the non-Swarajist members of the Nationalist Party. He could not, however, be unconscious of the fact that the turn of the electoral wheel had brought the Labour Party into office in Britain.

Motilal and some of his Congress colleagues had friends among Labour MPs, who had sympathised with Indian nationalist aspirations in the past. Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald himself had visited India, before the First World War; but for the illness of his wife, he would have presided over the Indian National Congress in 1911. It was important that the Indian case for political freedom should be so presented that it did not add to the difficulties of those in the Labour Party who were keen to open a new chapter in Indo-British relations.

On behalf of the Government of India, Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member, made it clear that no radical change was contemplated. He

catalogued the numerous interests which had to be safeguarded while advancing the constitutional progress of India: Indian princes, European commerce, the Secretary of State's Services, the minorities. He argued that responsible government promised by Montagu's declaration of August 1917, was not necessarily incompatible with a legislature enjoying limited powers, that India could move forward towards its destined goal only gradually, that the British Government was the sole judge of the manner and measure of each step; that the next step, the appointment of a Royal Commission was, according to the preamble of the Act of 1919, not due until 1929.

Rangachariar withdrew his resolution, and Motilal's motion was carried by 64 votes against 48; practically all the elected members entered the lobby against the government. This was the first and the most spectacular victory of the Swarajya Party; it was made possible by the co-operation of the Moderate and Muslim members who had followed the lead of Malaviya and Jinnah. Thanks to their co-operation, the first four budget grants were rejected in their entirety. On 17 March 1924, when the Finance Bill came up for consideration, its introduction was refused by the Assembly on general political grounds by 80 votes against 57.

In the spring of 1924, the Swarajists and their 'Independent' colleagues had every reason to be in high spirits. Besides rejecting the budget, they had been able to inflict a series of defeats upon the government on one issue after another. The Legislative Assembly had passed a number of resolutions — despite official opposition — calling for the release of political prisoners, for the repeal of the all repressive laws, especially the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 and the Criminal Amendment Act, and for the imposition of a countervailing duty on South African coal in India.

4. Tussle with Gandhi

On 5 February 1924, the very day on which Rangachariar first moved his resolution on responsible government in the Legislative Assembly, Gandhi, who was in Sassoon Hospital at Poona after an operation for appendicitis, was released. He had served less than one-third of his six-year prison term. While recommending his release, the Bombay Government had mentioned the possibility that he would denounce the Swarajists for 'their defection from the pure principles of non-cooperation and thus considerably reduce in legislatures their power for harm.'²⁹ It is not surprising that the Swarajists' joy at the Mahatma's release was not unmixed; if he endorsed the No-Changers stance on work in the legislatures, the bitter controversies of the previous year would rage once again.

Motilal Nehru could not leave Delhi while the Legislative Assembly was in session, but he sought to impress Gandhi with the spectacular achievements of his party. On 18 March, when the Assembly rejected the Finance Bill for the second time, he telegraphed the good news to the Mahatma. 'I have your telegram,' Gandhi replied. 'I rejoice because the victory gives you joy, but I cannot enthuse over it. I never doubted your very great tactfulness and persuasive eloquence.' What Gandhi questioned was not the immediate success of the Swarajists' tactics, but their ultimate wisdom.

The basic differences between the Swarajists and Gandhi came into high relief during the protracted negotiations at Juhu, near Bombay, where he was convalescing in April-May 1924. Motilal was joined by C.R. Das, but even their combined advocacy failed to convert the Mahatma. Eventually, the two parties agreed to differ and issued separate statements to the press.

Gandhi described the Swarajist leaders as 'the ablest, most experienced and honest patriots'; at the same time he acknowledged that his differences with them were not of mere detail. Though he advised the No-Changers in the Congress not to hinder the work of the Swarajists, he adhered to his view that council-entry was inconsistent with the principles and practice of non-violent non-cooperation. He defended the boycott of courts, councils and schools as originally approved by the Calcutta Congress; he doubted the efficacy of the Swarajist programme; he deprecated the tactics of obstruction in legislatures as 'a species of violence'.

The gulf between Gandhi and the Swarajist leaders was in fact deeper than what the studied courtesy of their press statements made it out to be. In a memorandum Motilal prepared on a rough draft of Gandhi's press statement he tore the Mahatma's arguments to shreds.³⁰ He deplored the continuing emphasis on 'Khilafat and Punjab wrongs', which were 'practically dead'. Of the triple boycott proclaimed in 1920, Motilal said that it was obvious that the preaching of high ideals, which the people were not ready to follow, only resulted in positive harm, 'otherwise we shall be weaving a cobweb of casuistry around us from which it would be impossible to extricate ourselves'. He argued that council-entry was not a negation of non-cooperation but its application to a new field — the 'sham parliaments' set up by the British to hoodwink the people of India. He failed to appreciate Gandhi's objection to the policy of obstruction in the councils. 'Our Swarajist nostrils', Motilal wrote, 'are not trained enough to smell violence in it'. Was not civil disobedience itself the highest form of obstruction?

Gandhi summed up his differences with Das and Motilal. 'The Swarajist method', he wrote, 'cultivates British opinion and looks to British

Parliament for Swaraj. The No-Changer method looks to the [Indian] people for it. . . . While one school [of thought] claims to give political education through the Councils, the other claims to give it exclusively by working among the people and evoking its organising and administrative capacity.' The Swarajists, argued Gandhi, believed that the constructive programme alone could not achieve Swaraj; the No-Changers believed that 'it and it alone' could achieve it.

Motilal, C.R. Das and Gandhi were picking up the threads of a debate which had rocked the Indian National Congress since the summer of 1922. Non-violent non-cooperation, propounded as a programme to meet the political situation in the autumn of 1920, had already hardened into a dogma. The Swarajists were, in Marxist parlance, 'revisionists', but with the important difference that they had to contend with the living Marx of non-violent non-cooperation. They were driven to despair by, what appeared to them as, Gandhi's unpolitical approach. His repeated references to charkha and khadi jarred on them. G.A. Natesan, a veteran Moderate leader of Madras and the editor of the *Indian Review*, who had supported Gandhi during the South African struggle, but had parted company with him on non-cooperation, confided to the Mahatma in November 1924:

Allow me to tell you that I have known and heard many leading Swarajists making fun of the khaddar programme and adopting spinning as a franchise. It seems to me, if I understand the temper of the country aright, most of the Swarajists will have no place in political life, if they do not hang on [to] you, and proclaim to sail under your banner, and yet they break most the spirit of your teachings and the conditions you lay down.³¹

5. The Calcutta Agreement

The struggle between the two factions in the Congress came to a head at the Ahmedabad meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in June 1924. The Swarajists suspected that an effort was being made by the No-Changer majority to squeeze them out of the executive bodies of the Congress. They were in a combative mood, and bitterly opposed a resolution moved by Gandhi, prescribing that members of elected Congress organizations must regularly spin for at least half an hour every day and send at least 2000 yards of 'even and well-twisted yarn' every month to the All-India Khadi Board. The resolution had a penal clause for those who held elective offices in the Congress, but failed to send their quota of yarn. Motilal Nehru objected to the resolution on the ground that it violated the letter as well as the spirit of the existing Congress constitution. He asserted that it was the right of the individual electors in a democratic organization to vote for anyone. 'The Indian

National Congress belongs as much to us', said Motilal, 'as to the opposite party. We will not allow, if we can help it, the constitution to be changed according to the caprice of a narrow majority whenever it may think necessary to crush the minority. The demand that the Swarajists should go out of the executive is . . . an unreasonable demand, and it is only due to our self-respect that we must resist it.'

At this stage, Motilal, C.R. Das and their supporters walked out of the meeting as a protest against Gandhi's resolution. The resolution was carried by 57 votes against 37. The voting came as a shock to Gandhi: even after the departure of the Swarajists, as many as 37 members of the AICC had voted against the spinning franchise. Gandhi had the penalty clause immediately deleted. A greater shock was in store for him when he moved a resolution condemning the murder of an Englishman by a Bengali revolutionary, Gopinath Saha. Eminent Swarajists, including C.R. Das, seemed ambivalent in their denunciation of political terrorism. Das moved an amendment to Gandhi's resolution which was defeated but by a narrow margin of eight votes. Gandhi found the atmosphere at the AICC meeting suffocating. The legal quibbling, the disparaging references to non-violence and non-cooperation, the mutual distrust and recrimination, and the factional spirit pervading the proceedings came as a revelation to the Mahatma, after two years' absence from the political scene.

The fact is that while the Swarajists paid homage to Gandhi in public, deep down they had a feeling that he was a good saint but a poor politician. They did not like his reduction of political issues to his moral algebra. They did not deny the value of constructive work for the removal of untouchability, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, and hand-spinning, but they wondered whether these activities could really add up to an effective political programme. Since civil disobedience was out of the question in the existing conditions in the country, work in legislatures seemed to the Swarajists the only practicable programme to keep the British bureaucracy in India on its toes. Durga Das, the journalist, who was then a correspondent of the Associated Press of India, recalls an interview with C.R. Das who expressed his 'sense of desperation. Gandhi, he felt was leading the country away from the path of constitutional struggle into the wilderness of sterile political agitation'. It was difficult, Das added, to counter Gandhi's popularity: 'How can we get rid of the Mahatma and put the people back on the road to the capture of power, now within our grasp?'³²

We find similar misgivings about Gandhi's leadership in a letter written by Motilal Nehru early in October 1924 from Delhi, where he was conferring with Das on the strategy of the Swarajya Party.

We know he [Gandhi] will follow his own methods, and to be perfectly frank with you, I have very serious doubts about the success of those methods. . . . It seems to me more than apparent that the whole brunt of real political work will fall on us. Gandhiji will either convert the Congress into a Spinners' Association or else stick to his five boycotts. Neither will suit us or the country.³³

After the Ahmedabad meeting of the AICC a split in the Congress seemed on the cards. It was not difficult for Gandhi to secure a majority in any Congress meeting, but a scramble for power was wholly repugnant to him: he was keen to heal the breach between the two Congress factions. Motilal Nehru, perhaps primed by his son, was equally anxious for a *modus vivendi*. After an exchange of letters between Gandhi and Motilal in July and August, the outlines of a compromise formula emerged, which received final shape at Calcutta in the first week of November 1924. Signed jointly by Gandhi, C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, the compromise came to be known as the Calcutta Agreement. It stipulated that the non-cooperation programme should be suspended except for boycott of foreign cloth, that all Congressmen should subscribe to the 'constructive programme', that the work in legislatures should be carried on on behalf of the Congress by the Swarajya Party which was authorized to make its own rules, and to raise and administer its own funds.

The only concession made to Gandhi in the Calcutta Agreement concerned the spinning franchise; the Congress constitution was to be amended, the four anna franchise was to be abolished; henceforth no one could be a member of any Congress committee or organization who 'did not wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar at political and Congress functions, or while engaged in Congress business and does not make a contribution of 2000 yards of evenly spun yarn per month of his or her spinning, or in case of illness, unwillingness or any such cause, a like quantity of yarn spun by another person.'³⁴

6. The Swarajist Triumph

The Calcutta Agreement which was approved by the All-India Congress Committee in November 1924, and by the Belgaum Congress a month later, was clearly a triumph for the Swarajists. The Congress had, in Gandhi's words, appointed the Swarajya Party as its agent for conducting its political activities. By a strange reversal of fortunes, the Swarajists, who had been virtually ousted at the Gaya Congress in December 1922, and been barely tolerated at the Coconada session a year later, were recognized as the authentic spokesmen of the Congress in December 1924. 'C.R. Das left Mr Gandhi's sanctity,' commented the British-

owned *Statesman*, 'while breaking his hold of the political machinery.'³⁵ The truth is that Gandhi made a voluntary surrender to the Swarajists. He cited official repression of the Swaraj Party in Bengal and the hectoring speeches of Birkenhead, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, as his reasons, for ending the feud in the Congress. But the Mahatma had other reasons too for the step he took. The Congress organization was in a bad way. In November 1923, Abul Kalam Azad (who had presided over the Special Delhi Congress session) had observed that 'virtually the Congress itself seemed to have ceased to function'.³⁶ A year later conditions were, if anything, worse. Hindu-Muslim tension had poisoned the political climate; in September 1924 Gandhi had undertaken a 21-day fast to sting the conscience of the errant communities. Gandhi was convinced that the need of the hour was unity not only in the Congress, but in the country. A month before the Belgaum Congress, he addressed a conference in Bombay 'representing all parties, communities and interests in India', and urged them, in view of the British repression in Bengal, to sink their differences and to work on a common platform for the good of the motherland. He called upon those who had retired from the Congress in 1920 to return to its fold.

The No-Changers, who had faithfully followed the Mahatma, were puzzled by, what seemed to them, his total surrender to the Swaraj Party. Gandhi exhorted them not to arrogate sanctity to themselves nor obstruct the work of the Swarajists.³⁷ He saw that the majority of the intelligentsia were attracted not by the constructive programme, but by fireworks in legislatures.³⁸ In September 1924, Gandhi had written to Rajagopalachari, the spokesman of the No-Changers in the Congress: 'We must abdicate power altogether. . . . There should be no decision by majority of votes. We must continue to surrender [to the Swarajists] upto the very margin of principle.'³⁹ A year later, Gandhi confided to Dr Ansari that he was 'personally as much opposed to council entry as I ever was. I could not convince the Swarajists of the error of council entry, and knowing also that my best friends and co-workers had become Swarajists, I took it that I could not do less than throw my weight with them as against other parties.'⁴⁰

The Calcutta Agreement needed the seal of approval of the Belgaum Congress. Sixteen provincial Congress committees had recommended Gandhi's name for the presidency, but he accepted it only after consulting Motilal Nehru. The Mahatma saw the Calcutta Agreement through the Belgaum Congress. He constituted the Working Committee for the following year in consultation with Das and Nehru: it was heavily weighted in their favour. The Swarajist victory was complete.

7. Party Management

While Motilal and Das were consolidating their position in the Congress, they were also trying to strengthen the Swaraj Party. The constitution of the Swaraj Party framed in February 1923 was amended in August 1924. The General Council was to consist of all members of the party in the Legislative Assembly, one-sixth of the members in each provincial council, and one-fourth of the Swarajist members of the AICC elected by themselves. The Executive Council was to include, besides the president, the general secretary and the treasurer, four members elected by the General Council and four members nominated by the president. The party organization retained its democratic base, but the president was given a commanding voice in decision-making.

One of the problems of the party was publicity. It was only natural that British-owned papers should be critical of the Swaraj Party; but it did not get from even nationalist papers as full and sympathetic a coverage as its leaders desired. Only in Bengal did the party have its own paper, the *Forward*, edited by Das himself; it was described by a reputable critic in 1924 as 'the best-edited paper in India'.⁴¹ 'You are already aware', Motilal wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, 'the *Hindustan Times* has slipped through our fingers'.⁴² He explored with Jayakar, the leader of the Bombay Swaraj Party, the possibilities of acquiring a controlling share in the *Bombay Chronicle*.⁴³ He toyed with the idea of starting a weekly paper in English or Hindi from Allahabad; apparently he had forgotten the sleepless nights he had spent over the running of the *Independent*. All these plans, however, ended up in smoke for want of funds.

Even though the Swaraj Party had always claimed to be a party within the Congress, it could make use neither of its organization nor its funds during the early years. Its membership fee of Rs 3 a year could not carry it far. Having renounced their fabulous legal practice during the Non-cooperation Movement, C.R. Das and Motilal, the founding fathers of the party, could not support it from their own resources. They had perforce to draw upon the generosity of the merchants and industrialists of Bombay and Ahmedabad. Motilal made no secret of the fact that he had sought contributions for the party. In a letter dated 19 August 1924 to the *Times of India*, he wrote that at both Ahmedabad and Bombay he had 'freely and openly asked all and sundry to subscribe to the party fund after fully explaining the commercial policy . . . of the party, including its attitude towards the excise duty on cotton for the removal of which the Congress had been agitating for years past long before the Swarajya party came into existence.' When it was insinuated that he was supporting protection for steel because he had entered into a secret deal with the Tatas, Motilal not only contemptuously refuted the charge, but,

on his next visit to Bombay, made it a point to stay with R.D. Tata, the head of the Tata family.

In July and August 1924, the remittances from Bombay and Ahmedabad added up to a little over a lakh of rupees, but they fell far short of what had been promised. Motilal discovered that Indian capitalists were difficult to pin down; they gave as little as they could, while they continually balanced the benefits of the nationalist pressure in the legislature against the risks of offending the British authorities. Four years later, Motilal told an industrialist of Bombay: 'An alliance between the Congress and the capitalists who are bent on profiting by the sufferings of the nation is an impossible one. The more suitable field of work for the Congress is among the workers and not the owners of the mills. But I was misled by the patriotic talk of some of my personal friends among the mill-owners. Mahatmaji never believed in an alliance with the latter, and I have now told him that he was right and I was wrong.'⁴⁴

8. Motilal and Jinnah

'You are aware', Motilal wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas on 2 December 1924, 'that the whole burden of political work in the country has fallen upon us, and we are fast drifting into strong currents of public life.'⁴⁵ How strong, swift and treacherous these currents were going to be was mercifully hidden from Motilal.

The great victories of the Swaraj Party in the spring of 1924 had been made possible by the compact between the Swarajists and Independents led by Jinnah. The compact broke down early in the Delhi session of 1925. Jinnah said he had made a mistake during the previous year and would no longer be a party to the Swarajist policy of obstruction and 'wrecking' of the constitution. He refused to bind himself in advance to any particular line of action; he would determine his attitude to each measure, that came before the Assembly, on its merits.

On 25 February 1925, when Motilal moved a resolution rejecting the demand for the Railway Board, Jinnah opposed it. The resolution was defeated. Three weeks later, when the Finance Member sought permission to introduce the Finance Bill, the Swaraj Party opposed it, but was again unsuccessful. The results of the divisions on the budget ceased to be predictable as they had been in 1924; much depended on Jinnah's attitude. For example, on 6 March the motion on cotton excise was carried against the government, but on the following day, a motion by a member of the Independent Party on 'Taxes on Income' was defeated by 41 to 60 votes, the Swarajists and four Independent members forming the minority, while the majority of Independent members went into the government lobby; Jinnah did not vote. On 12 March on a 'cut' proposed by a Swarajist member under the head 'Salt', the Independent Party

voted with the official bloc to defeat it; Jinnah himself abstained from voting.

There were several occasions during this session on which the Swarajists and the Independents voted together, such as on the rejection of the travelling allowances of the Governor-General's Executive Council, on the abolition of the Bengal Ordinance, on the establishment of a military college in India, and on the abolition of the separate railway carriages for Europeans, on protective tariff for Indian industries, and on issues concerning Indians overseas. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the Nationalist Party which had banded together most of the elected Indian members in the Assembly in February 1924 had disintegrated. Jinnah's *volte face* gave him a pivotal position in the Assembly. In the opinion of Sir Frederick Whyte, the President of the Assembly, 'Mr. Jinnah's personal ascendancy over the Chamber was the outstanding feature of the session of 1925. As leader of the Independent Party, he was arbiter in many important decisions.'⁴⁶

Curiously enough, the Independent Party which Jinnah led in the Legislative Assembly, was not a political party at all in the usual sense of the word. Its members owed their election to their own personal influence, and came together *after the election* only to pull greater weight in the legislature; they accepted Jinnah as their leader because of his stature as an all-India figure, his personal ability and political flair. Jinnah, who had been trained in the school of Indian politics associated with Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, had left the Congress in 1920 when it voted for Gandhi and non-cooperation. When the Swaraj Party was being formed, some of its members in Bombay were keen to enlist Jinnah's support.⁴⁷ In January 1924 Jayakar took C.R. Das to see Jinnah. Three months later Jinnah was present at some of the meetings between the Swarajist leaders and Gandhi. But there had never been any possibility of Jinnah joining the Swaraj Party; he was opposed as much to a policy of obstruction within the legislature, as he had been to civil disobedience outside it.

In retrospect, what is surprising is not that Jinnah broke his compact with the Swaraj Party, but that he entered into it at all. Evidently, he had been swept along the powerful current of nationalist fervour which had flowed through the legislatures with the advent of the Swarajists. In the first session of the Legislative Assembly in 1924 a series of defeats were inflicted on the government; the Nationalist Party, the 'informal coalition' of the Swarajist, Independent and Liberal members carried everything before it. It was only natural that the spotlight should have fallen on Motilal Nehru, the leader of the largest party and the *de facto* spokesman of the Nationalist Party.

It did not take Jinnah long to discover that the censure of the Legisla-

tive Assembly did not deflect the Government of India from its policies; the governor-general had powers under the Act of 1919 to certify bills and restore grants which had been turned down by the Assembly. It was not easy for Jinnah to keep his heterogenous group permanently aligned against the government; most members of his party had no strong political convictions; some of them represented commercial and industrial interests which could not afford to permanently alienate the government; quite a few were ambitious politicians coveting a seat on an official committee, a visit to Geneva, or a knighthood. Further, it was too much to expect that Jinnah, conscious of his own ability and his strategic position in the Assembly, would indefinitely play second fiddle to even Motilal Nehru.

Whatever Jinnah's motives in breaking away from the Nationalist Party, he saved the situation for the government. To quote again from Sir Frederick Whyte's report to the Viceroy,

the Independent Party, under his [Jinnah's] leadership, gave the Constitution [under Act of 1919] a new lease of life. . . . The deadlock, which seemed inevitable after the General Election of 1923, actually arrested constitutional progress in 1924; but has for the moment been removed in 1925. If the Independent Party can maintain its freedom of action, and will consent to use its power in the Assembly in the spirit displayed during the past session, the Constitution may continue to function not unsuccessfully till its term in 1929.

Sir Frederick noted that 'Pandit Motilal Nehru still stands prominent as the acknowledged leader of the Opposition, but neither he nor his party appeared to be at ease during this [1925] session.' Motilal had a passage of arms with Jinnah on the floor of the Assembly. Both of them were proud, quick-tempered and sharp-tongued. They clashed in the press when Jinnah imputed motives to the Swarajists for supporting the case for Indian steel. A few days before his death C.R. Das complained to Gandhi that Motilal had handled Jinnah rather harshly: 'Motilal is on the war path. He would not accept my advice to avoid this controversy.'⁴⁸ Though all co-operation between their parties did not cease, the relations between Motilal and Jinnah were never the same again. Motilal came to view Jinnah primarily as a political operator, and tended to underestimate his potential influence and skill. This miscalculation on his part was to have unfortunate consequences in 1928 for the Nehru Report and the solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem.

9. The British Response

Jinnah had rescued the government from the political quandary which the viceroy had instantly predicted after the general election of 1923. 'Upon the extension of the reforms', Reading had written to the

Secretary of State, 'they [the Swarajists] will claim to have a mandate and will presumably vote solid, and will doubtless have the support of the most of the remaining non-officials, probably with the exception of the Europeans and some very few Indians. They will be able to carry a resolution in support of the immediate extension of reforms. . . . It seems pretty certain that if we can give nothing better than the negative answer, there will be a persistent and systematic obstruction to the Budget.'⁴⁹

Two years earlier, in December 1921, when the Non-cooperation Movement was at its height, and the Prince of Wales was in India, Reading had favoured the extension of provincial autonomy beyond the limits set by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in order to placate the Congress. But he had been overruled, and indeed pulled up by the British Cabinet.⁵⁰ Two years later, conditions were no more propitious for a radical departure in the constitutional field. By a curious coincidence, the first Labour Government in British history was sworn in January 1924 when the Swarajists made their debut in legislatures in India. Indian leaders had friends in the Labour Party. On 22 February 1924, Motilal telegraphed to Colonel Wedgwood, MP, about his resolution for a Round Table Conference and urged him to 'save India from bitter discontent and misunderstanding'.⁵¹ Wedgwood's reply after two weeks read: 'Patience yet awhile. You must give us time to explore the many difficulties of the Indian situation.'⁵² Another Labour MP, Major Graham Pole, was in touch with Jayakar and assured him that Ramsay MacDonald, the Premier, was really sympathetic: 'He is entirely with us, the only difficulty being that Labour is in office, but not in power.'⁵³ It is true that the Labour Government was a minority one, depending for its survival on the support of the Liberal Party. However, being sensitive to the charge of 'weakness' in imperial policy from Conservative and Liberal critics, Ramsay MacDonald was hardly in a position to advance the constitutional timetable in India. Indeed, a few days before he took office, in an interview with St Nihal Singh, the London Correspondent of the *Hindu*, Ramsay MacDonald had indirectly administered a reproof to the Swaraj Party. There was no hope for India, he said, if it became the arena of 'a struggle between constitutionalism and revolution. No party in Great Britain will be cowed by threats of force or by policies designed to bring the Government to a standstill.'⁵⁴

The Swarajist hopes from the first Labour Government proved illusory. The proposal for a conference between the government and the representatives of the Indian opinion was rejected. Cabinet approval was granted to the hated Bengal Ordinance. Srinivasa Sastri, who was in London during the summer of 1924, wrote home: 'The [Labour] Ministry has no big plan for India. It only wishes to tide over the difficulty

somehow.⁵⁵ It would not be an exaggeration to say that the gulf between the Labour Party and the Indian nationalists actually widened in 1924.⁵⁶

The Labour ministry was voted out of office and gave way to a Conservative government in November 1924. Birkenhead, the new Secretary of State for India, lost no time in informing the viceroy for his 'secret information', that the new British Cabinet was 'under the influence of a considerable reaction from the Montagu reforms. It has a general impression that under the Coalition [ministry headed by Lloyd George] and since, too much has been given away.'⁵⁷ It was 'frankly inconceivable', Birkenhead wrote, 'that India would ever be fit for Dominion Self-government'. He ruled out a re-examination of the constitutional issue before 1929, and doubted if any re-examination would 'lead to the slightest extension of the reforms'. He acknowledged the difficulties which the Government of India were facing in the Legislative Assembly, but predicted possible relief from dissensions in the nationalist camp. The breach between the Swarajists and Independents, when it became visible, struck him as 'a new and promising and unexpected development. I hope it will grow.' Birkenhead's 'highest and most permanent hopes', however, rested 'upon the eternity of the communal situation. The greater the progress made by the Hindus, the greater in my judgement will the Muslim distrust and antagonism become.'

Clearly no significant concession by the British Government in the constitutional field was feasible during this period. We know that in the last months of his life C.R. Das expected a 'big gesture' from London. His optimism, reflected in his famous Faridpore speech, was, however, as misplaced in April-May 1925 as it had been in December 1921, when Madan Mohan Malaviya had initiated a peace move between the Congress and the government.⁵⁸

Since no genuine constitutional advance was intended, all that the Government of India could do in face of the Swarajist pressure was to mark time. An enquiry committee headed by the Home Member, Sir Alexander Muddiman, was appointed to go into the working of the 'reformed' legislatures within the framework of the Act of 1919. The Swaraj Party declined to co-operate with this enquiry which produced two reports in March 1925. The majority report signed by Sir Alexander Muddiman and the official members held that it was too soon to pronounce on the working of the Act of 1919, but it seemed to be working well, and offering a valuable training to the electorate, the legislature and the ministers. The minority report signed by Sapru, Jinnah, Sivaswami Aiyar and Paranjpye concluded that the dyarchical constitution in the provinces had failed and the Act of 1919 needed to be remodelled. By the time the Muddiman Committee reported, the government was no longer under pressure in the Legislative Assembly. 'Things are quiet

here', Reading wrote home after the Simla session in 1925 and described India as 'the most peaceful of all the countries'.⁵⁹

Birkenhead had also envisaged a mellowing of the opposition in the Indian legislatures with the passage of time. He told Reading that 'The Lobbies and the Smoke Room (if you have a Smoke Room) will do the same kind of work (even if on a small scale) as they have done here within your experience and mine.'⁶⁰

One of the arguments of the detractors of the Swarajist programme in the Congress had been that it would expose Congressmen to blandishments and temptations which a powerful foreign government could place in their way. Das and Motilal had foreseen this danger. The members of the Swaraj Party were forbidden to attend official lunches, receptions and dinners. It was, however, impossible to avoid all social intercourse; it was permitted to accept invitations to private parties. Sir Frederick Whyte had noted that despite heated exchanges in the Council Chamber there was 'free and easy friendliness of converse in the Lobbies'. High British officials knew how to make chivalrous gestures. Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member, was the first to compliment Motilal on his maiden speech in the Legislative Assembly, 'so thoughtfully phrased with such facility'.⁶¹ A few years later when Jawaharlal was in Europe for the medical treatment of his wife, Hailey telephoned him to enquire after her health. In January 1925, Hewett, the ex.Lt.Governor of the United Provinces, called on Motilal to compliment him on the speech he had delivered in the Assembly against the Bengal Ordinance'.⁶²

With Alexander Muddiman, Hailey's successor, Motilal hit it off even better. In 1926, when Motilal told him that the UP Government were imposing conditions for the issue of a passport to Jawaharlal, Muddiman had the conditions waived immediately.⁶³ As a member of the Skeen Committee, Motilal was treated with exceptional deference; if he had not resigned from it, he would have headed the sub-committee which toured military training establishments in France and Canada in 1926.

10. 'Mr President'

Motilal's acceptance of a seat on the Skeen Committee was a departure from the policy of the party, but he considered the issue of the Indianization of the army important enough to justify it.

Another seeming deviation was the election of V.J. Patel, the deputy leader of the Swaraj Party, to the presidency of the Legislative Assembly on the retirement of Sir Frederick Whyte. The election created a great stir. Sarojini Naidu, who was to preside over the next Congress session, came to Simla to canvass for Patel. Patel's opponent, Rangachariar had

the support of the entire government bloc, the European group, and Jinnah's Independents, but Patel won, polling 58 votes against Rangachariar's 56. Patel's victory was hailed as a great nationalist triumph. 'A round of entertainments began last night', Motilal wrote to his son on 23 August 1925, 'and will continue for some days. . . . You will be amused to hear that Patel's Presidential gown is being made out of Sarojini's [Naidu's] saree.'⁶⁴

Immediately after his election Patel had declared that he ceased to be a party man. 'From this moment', Patel told the Legislative Assembly, 'I belong to no party. I belong to all parties'. But he used the office of the president of the Assembly to contain and control the executive authority within the limits of the constitution. He cited rules and precedents of the House of Commons in a legislature which was semi-parliamentary, a half-way house between an autonomous parliament and an official body. Patel sat up late every night, looking into the agenda for the following day; his mastery of facts and constitutional procedure gave him complete command of the House. His rulings were awaited with bated breath by the Treasury Benches as well as by the Opposition. The Treasury Benches regarded him with mingled dislike, distrust and admiration. One of his triumphs was the change he was able to effect in the ceremonial for the inauguration of the Legislative Assembly. It had been customary for the viceroy to arrive at the Council Chamber in glittering robes, with members of the Executive Council in official dress in attendance. Outside the chamber there was a military display; inside the Assembly hall the presidents of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State were made to sit with the other members of the two legislatures, and to rise in their seats, as His Excellency entered and took his seat on the silver throne.

Patel considered this ceremonial highly derogatory to his position as president of the Assembly. The viceroy was welcome to visit the Assembly, he argued, but there was no reason why the president of the Assembly should leave his chair and sit with the members of the Assembly. The proper thing for the viceroy was to first go to Patel's room from where he would be duly conducted to the dais in the Assembly hall. Patel's proposal seemed outrageous to the government; it would rob the ceremony of all the pomp and glory associated with the Viceregal office. But Patel had his way. Lord Irwin came to the Legislative Assembly in a morning coat, attended only by his secretary and aide-de-camp, and read his speech from the presidential chair, Patel sitting on his right.⁶⁵

To an influential section of Maharashtrian Swarajists in the Central Provinces and Bombay Legislative Councils, Motilal's acceptance of a seat on the Skeen Committee and Patel's election as the president of the Legislative Assembly seemed a departure — a welcome departure — in

the policy of the Swaraj Party. It implied the recognition of the fact that the policy of continuous obstruction in legislatures was sterile, and needed to be replaced with that of Tilak's doctrine of 'responsive co-operation'. The fact is that some Swarajist leaders, such as Jayakar, Satyamurti and B.S. Moonje had never really liked the policy of obstruction advocated by Das and Motilal Nehru. But the first overt act of rebellion did not come until October 1925 when S.B. Tambe, the leader of the Berar Swarajists in the Central Provinces accepted the post of an Executive Councillor.

11. The Responsivist Revolt

Tambe, who had been elected president of the C.P Legislative Council in March 1925 was a frequent guest in Government House at Nagpur, and had easy access to Sir Montagu Butler, the governor. Butler 'exploited this link' to persuade Tambe to become the Home Member.⁶⁶ The Berar Swaraj Party, of which Tambe was the leader, approved his action and, indeed, called for the formation of a Swarajist ministry in the Central Provinces.

Motilal Nehru, who had succeeded C.R. Das as the president of the all-India party, was furious at Tambe's defection. He convened a meeting of the party's executive committee at Nagpur on 1 November, summoned all the Swarajist legislators in the Central Provinces, roundly condemned Tambe's action, and unequivocally ruled out office acceptance. He addressed public meetings at Nagpur, Amraoti and Pune, deprecating all talk of 'responsive co-operation'. The phrase was (Motilal said) a misnomer; there had been no response from the British Government to the 'national demand' to warrant co-operation with it.

Tambe's defection was a symptom of the deep discontent which had long afflicted Congressmen in CP and Maharashtra, particularly those who claimed to be Tilak's political heirs. Tilak had died on 1 August 1920 just as Gandhi was launching Non-cooperation Movement; many of his adherents had found it difficult to reconcile themselves to Gandhi's leadership and had fought hard against the non-cooperation programme at the Calcutta Congress. If in the end Maharashtrian politicians like N.C. Kelkar and B.S. Moonje decided to swim with the Gandhian tide, it was because they did not want to be left high and dry. Their reservations on the boycott of councils had lingered. In December 1921, while the Non-cooperation Movement was at its height, N.C. Kelkar commended⁶⁷ to Gandhi the potentialities of the councils for the nationalist cause. Kelkar was one of the first and most ardent Swarajists to follow the lead of Das and Motilal Nehru. Mahadev Desai records in his diary an interesting conversation between Kelkar and Gandhi when they met in November 1924, after the Calcutta Agreement. 'Let us sit

together', Kelkar said to Gandhi, 'Are we not old friends?' 'No', rejoined Gandhi, 'old enemies, new friends'.⁶⁸

Some of the CP 'Responsivists', such as Tambe and Raghavendra Rao, were ambitious politicians, who hungered for office whether through the Congress or without it. To them, refusal of office when the party was in a majority seemed illogical; they would have heartily endorsed the witticism of a Swarajist legislator of Madras that there was 'no meaning in a man getting married with view to follow celibacy'.⁶⁹ B.S. Moonje, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the provincial council, did not want any office for himself. However, he had decided to move his scene of activity to the Central legislature at the next general election, and was planning to plant two of his own henchmen as ministers in CP.

Motilal acted swiftly and firmly against Tambe, but he could not crush the Responsivist rebellion. It soon became clear that Tambe had the sympathy of some of the leading Maharashtrian Swarajists; Kelkar, Moonje and, above all, of Jayakar, the leader of the party in the Bombay Council. A prominent Home Ruler during the First World War, a constitutionalist to his finger tips, Jayakar had always been ambivalent about Gandhi and the Non-cooperation Movement. Das and Motilal had, however, welcomed Jayakar's adherence to the Swaraj Party because of his public spirit, legal ability and level-headedness. From Motilal, Jayakar received a degree of trust and respect which no other provincial leader seems to have enjoyed. Jayakar had thus no excuse for not knowing Motilal's views on office acceptance. Soon after the election of 1923, while objecting to the rules framed by the Bombay party, Motilal had told Jayakar: 'It is hardly necessary for me to tell you that I am a non-cooperator first and a Swarajist afterwards. Always remember . . . that we have gone into the councils to use them for our own purposes and not to be used by the councils to carry on the present system with a few advantages here and there.'⁷⁰ Jayakar had, however, never been convinced of the wisdom of the policy of obstruction. The Tambe affair struck him not as a disaster, but as an occasion for a reorientation of the party's policies. He argued that the Swaraj Party had already abandoned its original policy with Motilal's acceptance of a seat on the Skeen Committee and Patel's election as president of the Legislative Assembly, and that the next logical step was the capture of all 'places of power, influence and initiative'.⁷¹ Jayakar's case was untenable; Motilal's presence on the Skeen Committee could by no stretch of imagination be considered as an act of collaboration with the government. And as to V.J. Patel, he soon became a thorn in the side of the British bureaucracy.

The Maharashtrian leaders mounted an attack on Motilal at the Cawnpore [Kanpur] Congress in December 1925. They were powerfully reinforced by Malaviya,⁷² but suffered an overwhelming defeat.

The Congress upheld Motilal's stand; it strengthened his hands by recognizing the Swaraj Party as an integral part of the Congress organization; it decided that the next election (scheduled for November 1926) would be fought by and in the name of the Congress. The Cawnpore session directed an intensification rather than a relaxation of the policy of obstruction. It resolved that, in the absence of a satisfactory British declaration on the 'national demand', which had been approved by the Legislative Assembly in February 1924, the Swaraj Party should oppose the budget at the initial stage and then walk out of the legislatures as a protest.

On 6 March 1926, Motilal made a statement in the Legislative Assembly. The Swaraj Party was, he said, under a mandate from the Indian National Congress to walk out as a protest against the government's attitude on the issue of constitutional reforms. The party had on two previous occasions, in 1924 and 1925, taken part in the discussions on the budget. 'The system itself', Motilal said, 'is a perennial grievance and, therefore, it is not necessary for this House to pick and choose and select this or that demand [in the budget statement] which has been laid before us'. Two years earlier, a message had gone from the Swaraj Party to the people of the United Kingdom: unless the system of government was changed according to the wishes of the people of India, there would be no contentment in the country. That message, Motilal said, had remained unheeded; the latest utterances of responsible members of the British Government 'had shown the utter futility of any further action that can be taken in this House'. The government had ignored the resolutions of the Assembly and approved bills and budgets rejected by it. 'We have no further use', Motilal said, 'for these sham institutions and the least we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of this nation is to get out of them and go back to the country for work in the country.'

At the end of his speech, Motilal led his party out of the Council Chamber. Similar demonstrations took place in provincial capitals when legislative councils met for the budget session; an exception was, however, made in the case of the Central Provinces to enable the local Swaraj Party to throw out the provincial budget, including the ministers' salaries.

The 'walk-out' earned the Swaraj Party banner headlines in the press, but it left the field clear for its opponents. The Government of India took the fullest advantage of the absence of the Swarajists to push through unpopular measures. In March 1925, Chintamani, Jinnah, Malaviya and others discussed the formation of a new party to take the place of the Swaraj Party. Motilal saw the grave risks of a schism in the Swaraj Party in an election year, and decided to attempt a rapprochement with

Jayakar and his friends. On his initiative, an 'informal conference' was called in Gandhi's ashram at Sabarmati on 21 April 1926.⁷³ Among those who were present were M.R. Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar, B.S. Moonje, Sarojini Naidu and Motilal Nehru. The Responsivists agreed to bury the hatchet, and to stand on the Swarajist ticket, provided some latitude was permitted to the provincial parties to decide, after the elections, as to whether there was a 'sufficiency of responsibility, power and initiative' for office acceptance. The Sabarmati Agreement was not ratified by the AICC; indeed it became a bone of contention between Motilal and Jayakar. The fact is that their differences were much too fundamental to be resolved by vague phrases. On his way back from Ahmedabad Motilal had confided to his son that the meeting with the Responsivists had been 'highly successful', but that he had really conceded very little:

They wanted a toy and I have given it to them. . . . Why did we not take ministerships? Simply because the ministers were not given any real power, responsibility or initiative in the administration of their departments. We now say that if they are now given that power, etc., we shall take office. The sole judges of the sufficiency of the response are Jayakar and myself, but there is a contemporaneous verbal arrangement that in case of any difference of opinion among us, Mahatmaji will 'informally' advise. This is all camouflage. The real judge will be myself and you know how difficult it will be to satisfy me.⁷⁴

The Responsivists were not prepared to be fobbed off with 'toys'; what they wanted was office under the Crown. And Motilal would not allow them to take it.

It was a misfortune of the Swaraj Party that, in the two provinces in which it was the strongest after the 1923 elections, it came to be riddled with internal dissensions. The party had split over the Tambe affair in the Central Provinces. It was in little better condition in Bengal. The sudden death of C.R. Das in June 1925 had exposed the heterogeneous elements whom only his personal influence had held together. The Bengal party came to be increasingly plagued by personal jealousies, factional squabbles and communal tensions. Ironically, the Bengal Pact, designed by Das to win over Muslims became an irritant in Hindu-Muslim relations; most of the Bengali Hindus resented it, and the Muslims ceased to be euphoric about it. In August 1925 J.M. Sen Gupta, who had succeeded Das as leader of the party in Bengal Council, sought Motilal's permission for backing Fazlul Haq, in his contest for the Council presidency, in exchange for his support in blocking the formation of a ministry. Motilal warned Sen Gupta against opportunist politics; he suggested that if the worst came to the worst, and a ministry was formed in Bengal in spite of the opposition of the Swaraj Party, it was open to the Swarajists to walk out of the council.⁷⁵

12. The 1926 Elections

Two months before the election in November 1926 another serious defection from the Swaraj Party took place with the resignation of Lajpat Rai. He had been elected to the Legislative Assembly in December 1925 and joined the party in January 1926. He had rejected the overtures of the Responsivists at the Cawnpore Congress. But soon after his return from Europe in August 1926, he executed a volte-face, and joined Malaviya in organizing a new party, the Independent Congress Party. One of the reasons he gave for breaking away from the Swaraj Party was that it was sacrificing Hindu interests.⁷⁶

Motilal, who was himself wholly free from religious passion and prejudice, was deeply concerned at the growth of communal tension in the country. Most of the Muslim leaders, after the collapse of the Khilafat agitation had been drifting away from the Congress. The Hindu leaders protested that the Swarajist tactics had provoked the government and contributed to the formation of an Anglo-Muslim axis. The *Leader of Allahabad* edited by C.Y. Chintamani, described 'Swarajism', as synonymous with 'the betrayal of just and legitimate Hindu interests'.⁷⁷ After his release from jail Gandhi had tried hard to combat communal hatred. His doctrine of non-violence, he pleaded, held the key not only to the liberation of India from foreign rule, but also to peace within the country; a civilized society which had renounced violence as a means of settling individual disputes must also eschew violence between classes and communities. Gandhi's crusade for communal peace dramatized by his 21-day fast in September 1924, did not, however, meet with much success.

In the summer of 1926, Motilal tried his hand at the problem which had defied the Mahatma. Jointly with Abul Kalam Azad he founded the Indian National Union, consisting of those who were unaffected by communal bias. It was to be a 'non-political' and 'non-party' organization; its doors were open to all except to those who belonged to communal organizations. Its basic tenets included full liberty of religious views, absolute tolerance of views and practices of others, and adjustments of differences on the basis of strict legal rights of communities and individuals.

The manifesto of this new 'centre party', signed by the veteran Swarajist leader and the young Maulana, propounded unexceptionable principles. Appeals to reason, justice and fair-play could not, however, put out the communal fires stoked by religious fanaticism, social tensions, economic rivalries, and vested interests of all sorts, including those of the ruling power. The Indian National Union remained still-born, and had no perceptible effect upon the fortunes of the Swaraj Party in the 1926 elections.⁷⁸

The election manifesto of the Swaraj Party, issued by the Secretary, Indian National Congress, stressed Swarajist adherence to the principles of resistance to British rule, refusal of supplies in legislatures and non-acceptance of office.

The 1926 election was fought less on issues of public importance than one on trivial but emotive issues such as music before mosques and cow slaughter.

The Responsivist rebellion and the communal antagonism were the worst possible setting for the Swaraj Party's electoral battle. Motilal was the chosen target of his opponents. He was represented as the enemy of the Hindus, as a 'beef-eater', and destroyer of cows; it was alleged that he was responsible for the stoppage of Ramlila processions in Allahabad. It would, however, not be correct to suggest that Motilal adopted a sectional appeal during the election campaign.⁷⁹ Never before had an election in India aroused such religious bitterness. Motilal could not ignore the propaganda against him and his party, but he had to be patient with Hindu audiences on whom (because of separate electorates for Muslims) the fate of the Swaraj Party wholly depended. He and his party could not descend to the level of their opponents, and they paid the price for it. Of the seats in the provincial councils, the Swaraj Party did not win a single seat in the Punjab; in the UP, it lost all Hindu seats except that of Motilal, who was elected unopposed. In Delhi Asaf Ali, the Swarajist candidate, was defeated by a Hindu MahasabHITE. Motilal attributed 'the veritable rout' of his party in northern India to the unscrupulous appeals to religion by communalists in both camps. The Swarajists were defeated, he said, 'not because they were Swarajists but because they were nationalists'.

The 1926 elections left a bitter legacy. In retrospect, it seems that the communalism of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai was primarily an electoral tactic, which paid off handsomely. The acerbity between the rival Congress factions was not to last long; they found it possible to co-operate in the coming years on major political issues in the legislatures. The alienation of the Muslim intelligentsia had more serious consequences which became visible two years later when the Nehru Report was published.

12. In the Doldrums

The general election of 1926 left the Swaraj Party heavily mauled.⁸⁰ Except in Madras, it lost ground everywhere; in Bombay it lost heavily to the Responsivists; in Bihar and Orissa it barely maintained its position. In Bengal and the Central Provinces it was still the largest party, but it was powerless to create a constitutional deadlock; in these two provinces dyarchy, which had been in abeyance, was restored.

In the Legislative Assembly the 38-member Swaraj Party was also weaker, but on important issues it could count upon the support of the Nationalist Party led by Lajpat Rai and Malaviya. Jinnah headed a small group of ten-odd 'independent' members, including two Hindus; he remained ostentatiously 'non-aligned', sometimes voting with the Swarajists, sometimes with the government. Most of the Muslim members sat aloof as an unorganized group, but usually voted with the government.

The third Legislative Assembly met in January 1927 in a newly constructed building, which today houses the Indian Parliament. The session began with an adjournment motion by Motilal Nehru to discuss the non-attendance of S.C. Mitra who had been elected to the Assembly whilst still a prisoner under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. The motion was approved by 64 votes against 46. Two weeks later, Motilal carried a resolution recommending that all detenus under old regulations as well as under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 should either be released or brought to trial. A resolution refusing all but Rs 100 of the demand of the Railway Board was also carried by 59 votes to 52. Further, the Assembly refused the demand for the expenses of the Governor-General's Executive Council as 'a protest against the present system of government in India and lack of response made to nationalist demands.'

As against these 'victories' must be set a number of reverses suffered by the nationalist bloc. The Finance Bill was passed, and the Indian Currency Bill approved in the teeth of the Swarajist opposition. The bid to halve the Salt Tax failed. A proposal to reiterate 'the national demand' on the lines of Motilal's resolution of February 1924 had to be abandoned, when it was discovered that some Muslim members intended to raise the question of safeguards for the Muslim minority and thus give a communal edge to the debate.

The fact is that the atmosphere in the Assembly was very different from what it had been in the previous Assembly. No longer did the government feel beleaguered as it had done in 1924; the Swarajist opposition had lost its élan. Motilal Nehru found little in the proceedings to enthuse over. On 10 March 1927 he confided to Jawaharlal, who was then in Europe:

The great currency debate has come and gone. We lost by 3 votes (65 to 68). There was great excitement for two days. The galleries were full. I gave a silent vote and the whole show has left me cold. Jinnah's Mohammedans all voted with the Govt. If we could manage to get two of these votes with us, that would have been a tie in which case Patel was sure to give his casting vote to us. . . . The budget is at the moment being discussed. We carried a vote of censure on Govt. yesterday. There is nothing to be done now.

Member after Member is rising to move token cuts on various heads of secondary importance. Half the House is empty. No divisions are being called. The whole thing is unreal. There was at least the charm of novelty in the last Assembly. There is none now.

Three weeks later, Motilal was glad to see the end of the session 'with all its accompaniments of worry and humiliation', and to shake the dust of Delhi off his feet. He told his son: 'Both you and Gandhiji were wrong in advising me to stick to the Assembly. However it is a relief to think oneself free from it for the next 9 months.'⁸¹ Motilal had planned a trip to Europe which would bring him back to India at the end of the year.

What troubled Motilal was not only the uncertain behaviour of the other parties in the legislature, but the indiscipline in his own party. Probably the worst offender was Srinivas Iyengar, the deputy leader of the party. A former Advocate-General of Madras, he had, in defiance of the Congress mandate, entered the Madras Council in 1920. However, he resigned from the Council, took active part in Congress work and was regarded as the architect of the Congress victory in Madras in the 1926 elections. He presided over the Gauhati Congress in December 1926, and was elected deputy leader of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Assembly. He was not an impressive figure in the Assembly; he spoke too fast, and in too a monotonous tone, to be an effective speaker. He was indiscreet in conversation and started a whispering campaign against Motilal. Inordinately vain and ambitious, he aspired to supplant Motilal in the leadership of the party. But he proved a miserable failure in holding the party together during the Simla session in 1927 when Motilal was away to Europe. 'Under Srinivas Iyengar', Lord Irwin, the viceroy, told the Secretary of State, 'the old discipline and cohesion of the Swaraj Party were noticeably absent.'⁸²

The Kanpur Congress, while directing the Swaraj Party to walk out of legislatures in 1926, had stipulated that permission could be given to members to take part in the proceedings when it was in national interest to do so. This permission, accorded by a Special Committee constituted for the purpose, was availed of by most of the provincial parties. Most Swarajists were keen to get back to their legislatures and could easily produce reasons for doing so. For example, the UP Swarajists asked to attend the provincial council for the Tenancy Bill. The Punjab Swarajists went further, and took part in the proceedings of the Punjab Council in a debate on the Court Fees Bill, in anticipation of the approval of the Special Committee!

It was not only the Swaraj Party which faced the problem of discipline. The Nationalist Party in the Legislative Assembly was riven by

personal jealousies. Jayakar did not get on with Malaviya, and K.C. Neogy, one of the ablest members of the party was discontented. The viceroy remarked upon the 'disorganization of the Opposition as a whole . . . accompanied by a steady disintegration of the two main parties, the Swarajists and the Nationalist, which form practically the whole of the Opposition.'⁸³ Irwin had long since written off the Swaraj Party. In 1926, V.J. Patel, the president of the Assembly, had vainly pleaded with Irwin to make some gesture at the commencement of his Viceroyalty which could help Motilal Nehru to bring his party back to the legislatures. 'It would be wholly indefensible for me', Irwin confided to Birkenhead, 'to take any action that must inevitably have the effect of rehabilitating the fortunes of a party which had made no secret of its desire to embarrass Government.'⁸⁴

13. The Last Phase

Indian politics seemed stagnant in 1927. Reading had prophesied that his successor would have an easy interlude of eighteen months, which could be a lull before a storm. The prophecy turned out to be true, but the storm was brought on by the British Government itself. The Reforms Act of 1919 contained a clause for a review of the constitutional position after ten years. On 8 November 1927 Birkenhead announced the appointment of a Royal Commission headed by Sir John Simon. What hurt Indian feeling most was that no Indian had been included in the commission, which came to be looked upon as an inquisition by foreigners into India's fitness for self-government. The Indian National Congress decided to boycott the commission at 'every stage and in every form'. Other political parties such as the Nationalist Party, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Independent Party, the Jinnah wing of the All India Muslim League, which were otherwise poles apart, joined in denouncing the Simon Commission. On 3 February 1928, when the commission landed in Bombay, an all-India hartal was observed. Black flags and shuttered shop windows greeted the commission wherever it went.

On 16 February 1928, the eyes of the whole country were riveted on the Legislative Assembly in Delhi, when Lajpat Rai moved that 'the Governor-General-in-Council be pleased to convey to His Majesty's Government the Assembly's entire lack of confidence in the Parliamentary Commission which has been appointed to review the constitution of India'. The motion was carried by 68 votes against 62. During the budget discussions, when the grant under the head, Miscellaneous, came up, Motilal demanded the deletion of the sum of Rs 340,000 earmarked for the Simon Commission. James Crear, the Home Member, pleaded that funds were required for Simon and his colleagues to do their work, and asked, 'What is the alternative?' Quick came the retort

from Jinnah: 'Send them back.' Motilal's motion was carried by 66 votes against 59.

The debate on the Simon Commission was one of the highlights of the Legislative Assembly in 1928. Public excitement again rose to a high pitch in September when a Public Safety Bill was brought forward by the government; its avowed purpose was to curb the growth of communism, but it was really aimed at some of the British Labour leaders, such as Bradley and Philip Spratt, who had been active in the Indian trade union movement. When the bill came back from the Select Committee for consideration, the voting was 61 for and 61 against. V.J. Patel cast his vote against the bill. He explained that an extraordinary measure like the Public Safety Bill ought to command wide support, and should not become law on the strength of the President's casting vote.

In January 1929 the government brought forth a revised and more stringent Public Safety Bill. It came back to the Assembly from the Select Committee on 28 March. During the previous week, 31 Communists, including S.A. Dange, S.S. Mirajkar, G. Adhikari, R.S. Nimbkar and Shaukat Usmani, had been rounded up, besides Bradley and Spratt. They were all hauled up for trial in the small town of Meerut in western UP, instead of at Bombay or Calcutta from where most of the accused hailed. As some of the clauses of the revised Public Safety Bill seemed to tally with the charges against the accused, the opposition called on the government either to withdraw the case or to drop the bill till the court gave its verdict. President Patel adjourned the House. On 11 April when the Assembly re-assembled, he ruled the bill out of order. The Government of India issued an ordinance and validated the bill.⁸⁵

The Simon Commission had raised the political barometer and temporarily brought together a number of parties which had otherwise little in common. A challenge from Birkenhead stung the nationalist leaders into seeking an agreed solution of the constitutional problem. 'I have twice in three years', declared Birkenhead, 'during which I have been Secretary of State, invited our critics in India to put forward their suggestions for a constitution to indicate to us the form in which in their judgement any reform of constitution may take place. That offer is still open.'

Birkenhead's 'offer' was in fact a trap; any attempt to precisely define constitutional arrangements for an independent India was bound to revive communal and factional animosities. So far as the Swaraj Party was concerned, the need for Hindu-Muslim accord on the constitutional issue had been accepted by the Gauhati Congress; the outlines of an agreement incorporating joint electorates and safeguards for the Muslim community had in fact emerged from informal discussions between Hindu and Muslim leaders in March 1927, and the agreement had been

endorsed by the Madras Congress in December 1927. There was thus no need for the Indian National Congress to convene an All-Parties Conference in 1928. But the boycott of the Simon Commission had created a euphoria, and the Swarajist leaders, most of whom were eminent lawyers, were attracted by the idea of framing a constitution. The Committee which actually drafted the report was headed by Motilal Nehru and included Tej Bahadur Sapru. It soon found itself assailed by conflicting demands of all sorts of communal and fanatical groups whose claims could not possibly be reconciled. The result was that the report failed to satisfy even Muslim leaders like Jinnah who had agreed to the compromise of 1927.

The Nehru Report adopted dominion status as the basis of its recommendations out of deference to the Liberals and other parties represented in the All-Parties Conference. The younger wing in the Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, did not like Indian freedom to be hedged in by any limitations; they formed an Independence League to promote the ideology of independence.

Gandhi had taken little part in the All-Parties Conference or in the drafting of the Nehru Report. His own instinct had been in favour of seeking agreement on a few basic issues rather than of drafting a constitution.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, he described the recommendations made in the Nehru Report as satisfying 'all reasonable aspirations'. He had been a silent spectator at the Gauhati Congress in 1926 and the Madras Congress in 1927. It is doubtful if he would have taken any more interest in the Calcutta Congress in December 1928, were it not for the urgent summons from Motilal Nehru who presided over the session.

Gandhi's presence saved the situation at Calcutta. On the basis of a compromise formula drafted by him, the Congress passed a resolution accepting the Nehru Report on the condition that if, by 31 December 1929, it was not accepted by the government, the Congress would demand complete independence and fight for it, if necessary, by resorting to civil disobedience. Were it not for the impatience of the young men, Gandhi would have preferred to give two years to the government to make up its mind, and to the Congress to set its house in order. The British Government, he warned the Congress, was going to concede neither dominion status nor independence until the nation was ready to assert its rights, or, as he put it, until 'the necessary sanctions had been forged'. If Congressmen were serious about the resolution they had passed, hard work lay ahead of them.

Few of those who had applauded Gandhi's historic resolution at the Calcutta Congress realized its full implications for the future of the Swaraj Party. But Motilal Nehru, who in 1929 headed both the Congress

and its legislative wing, saw that his partymen needed to be jolted out of their complacency. When it was announced by the viceroy in June 1929 that the life of the central and provincial legislatures, except those of Bengal and Assam, would be extended beyond December 1929, Motilal took it as a challenge. The Congress ultimatum to the government was to expire on 31 December 1929 and the elections were due in November 1929. It seemed the government wanted to prevent the electorate from giving a verdict on the demand and the timetable formulated by the Calcutta Congress. In June 1929, with the approval of the Congress Working Committee and the AICC, Motilal as the president of the Swaraj Party, directed its members to abstain from attending the legislatures, and to devote all the time they could spare to Congress work, such as formation of village and local committees, enrolment of Congress members and volunteers, and the boycott of foreign cloth. Every legislator was further enjoined to send to Motilal directly a monthly record of what he had done to further the Congress programme.⁸⁷

To most members of the Swaraj Party, this directive came as a thunder-clap. Motilal received letters conveying shock and dismay from all parts of India. B.C. Roy from Bengal, Jamnadas Mehta from Bombay, G.B. Pant from UP and S.K. Sinha from Bihar gave reasons why it was important for the party not to absent itself from the legislatures. Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been recently elected to the Bengal Council, issued a statement to the press.

The Swarajists cannot, in my opinion, adopt with equanimity a policy which will virtually help to undo the work of Deshbandhu [C.R. Das] and the Swaraj Party. However strongly we may condemn the action of the Government in extending the life of the Legislatures outside Bengal and Assam, the proper method of retaliating is not by boycotting the Legislatures, but by stiffening our opposition there. . . . Further we have been returned by the people of this province [Bengal] considerably strengthened as a party. . . . It is possible that our presence in the Council will prevent the formation of a ministry, and if a ministry is formed we shall in all probability be able to overthrow it.⁸⁸

Abul Kalam Azad advised Motilal to exempt Bengal from any proposal to boycott legislatures, if he did not want the discipline and prestige of the Congress to be destroyed in that province. 'There is not a single person in Bengal', Azad wrote, 'who is in favour of the boycott of legislatures.'⁸⁹

Motilal was not convinced by these arguments. 'The first and foremost question' he posed to his partymen was whether they really believed in the resolution passed by the Calcutta Congress in December 1929. If they did, was it not their duty to prepare for a campaign of

non-cooperation, including non-payment of taxes, in the event of either the Nehru Report not being accepted in its entirety by the British Government before the 31 December 1929, or of its being rejected earlier?⁹⁰ Those who worried about particular measures pending in legislatures had forgotten the real purpose for which the Swarajists had entered the legislatures. Had not the very first manifesto of the Swaraj Party declared that it would not concern itself with trivial reforms of the administration to be obtained by the grace of the government, but would insist on transfer of power. 'I wish', Motilal said, 'this principle had been strictly adhered to. But circumstances intervened which necessitated a period of waiting. . . . It was decided to employ that period in doing what little was possible in the existing circumstances. It is not for me here to justify all the acts and omissions of the Congress Party in legislatures during the last six years. And I am free to admit that mistakes inseparable from every new experiment have been committed now and then, but there is no justification to perpetuate these mistakes.'⁹¹

So hostile was the reaction to the boycott directive that the Congress leadership was compelled to review it. The Working Committee decided to leave the question of boycotting the legislatures to the Lahore Congress. The All-India Congress Committee met in the last week of July, and Gandhi himself moved a resolution permitting attendance in the legislatures. He made no secret of the fact that the resolution was a compromise designed to preserve the unity of the party. He warned that the boycott of the legislatures was inevitable if the Lahore Congress declared for independence, and approved a civil disobedience campaign to achieve it.

At the Lahore Congress, Motilal confessed that the purpose for which the Swaraj Party had been founded had not been realized, that the Councils had distracted Congressmen from their real goal, that some of their ablest men had been 'entrapped' by the government in one committee or the other.⁹² Motilal was opposed by some of his ablest lieutenants in his party who insisted that council boycott was 'a suicidal policy', that councils formed the 'supreme power house' of the government, and, therefore, an ideal target for nationalist propaganda. The Bombay Swarajist leader, Jamnadas Mehta, asserted that 'not all men on the dais of the Congress platform could jointly do as much work as President Patel had done in the Assembly.'⁹³ Satyamurti refuted the argument that the Council work diverted the energies of the nationalists. 'After all,' he said, 'you need only six to seven hundred men in the councils for 50 days in the year.'⁹⁴

On the merits of the council work, Gandhi clinched the argument by quoting Motilal, one of the two founders of the Swaraj Party: 'He speaks

of the Assembly with bitter experience: "My work I have done, I shall not be able to carry on the battle of Swaraj even a step further by working there." 'That testimony', Gandhi said, 'is conclusive for me.'

Immediately after the Lahore Congress, Motilal directed all members of the party in the central and provincial legislatures to send their resignations to the governor-general. He reminded them of their pledge before the elections to resign their seats when called upon to do so.⁹⁵ Most of the members obeyed, but with a heavy heart. Some senior Swarajists such as Kiran Sankar Roy in Bengal⁹⁶ and S. Satyamurti in Madras, even suggested the formation of a new party.⁹⁷ Motilal discovered that it was as hard to wind up the Swarajist experiment as it had been to launch it seven years earlier.

14. The Summing up

C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, the founding fathers of the Swaraj Party had declared that it would practise 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction' in the legislatures. Its members would neither ask questions, nor move resolutions; they would neither accept seats on committees of the council, nor attend official parties. Where they were in a majority, they would not accept office and force the suspension of the constitution. Where they were in a minority, they would not take their seats. It was easier to prescribe such a stern code than to enforce it. In the event, the only effective prohibition was the one that pertained to office acceptance; on this both Das and Motilal remained adamant.

The original aim of the Swaraj Party, that of 'wrecking the constitution from within', and making government through councils impossible was not realized, and was indeed unrealizable. The councils constituted under the Act of 1919 did not easily lend themselves to this strategy. The narrow franchise ensured a substantial representation to landlords and other conservative elements in the legislatures; there was, in addition, a sizable bloc of official, nominated and European members. Only in one province, that is, in the CP did the Swaraj Party win a clear majority in 1923: in this province no ministry could be formed for three years and the constitution was virtually in abeyance. In the Bengal Council the Swaraj Party was the largest group, but without a clear majority. If C.R. Das was able to give battle to the government and bring dyarchy to a standstill, it was with the essentially unstable support of other groups. Even in these two provinces the Swarajist success did not endure. In the Central Provinces the party foundered on the rock of Responsivism; in Bengal the cohesion and militancy of the Swaraj Party did not long survive the death of C.R. Das.

From the British point of view, the constitutional crises in Bengal and CP were embarrassing, but they did not create any insuperable difficulties. The governors had under the Act of 1919 powers to 'certify' rejected bills and budgets, and to carry on the provincial administration without ministers and legislatures. The real confrontation between the government and the Swaraj Party took place in the Legislative Assembly in the spring of 1924 which marked the acme of Swarajist enthusiasm and achievement. The Swarajists seemed a solid phalanx under the leadership of Motilal Nehru, who was able, with the help of Muslim and Moderate members, to inflict a series of defeats on the government. The viceroy had the power to ignore the verdicts of the legislature. As the *London Times* once put it, the Government of India could be defeated, but it could not be removed.⁹⁸ But the adverse publicity in India and Britain was something of an embarrassment. Luckily for the government, as we have already seen, Jinnah rescued it from a political quandary by disrupting the informal coalition which had made nationalist victories possible in 1924.

Continual sniping in the legislatures was irksome for the British officials, most of whom were not cut out for a parliamentary role. Sir Malcolm Hailey, when leaving the post of the Home Member (and the leader of the House in Legislative Assembly) for that of a Governor remarked he was going 'where Patels do cease to trouble and Pandits are at rest'.⁹⁹

Not all senior civil servants spoke about their experience in councils in a light vein. In his book, *The Dilemma in India*, Sir Reginald Craddock, a retired Governor, referred to the Legislative Assembly as an arena where the Government of India was 'perpetually humiliated and its spokesmen compelled to pretend that the men who indulge in these burlesques of reason are really the chosen representatives of the people'.¹⁰⁰

As we have already seen, neither the Government of India, nor the British Government in the twenties was ready to take a major step in the constitutional field. Nevertheless, there were certain issues on which the views of the opposition in the legislatures did have an impact on the decision-makers, such as protection for Indian industries, management of railways, the establishment of a military college in India, and the problems of Indians overseas.

The question may be asked, whether the Swarajist policy of obstruction delayed the devolution of power from British to Indian hands. The fact is that even during years 1920-3, when the Congress had boycotted the legislature and the Swarajists were nowhere on the scene, and the Liberals (who were sworn to constitutional methods) held office as ministers in most of the provinces, the British governors exhibited no

particular desire to work the system of dyarchy in a generous spirit. For this we have the evidence of two Moderates, C.Y. Chintamani¹⁰¹ and R.P. Paranjpye,¹⁰² who served as ministers in UP and Bombay respectively, and were disenchanted by the niggardly and pettifogging attitude of the governors and the senior ICS officers. With this attitude of the British bureaucracy in Simla and London, there was little chance of any acceleration of the constitutional processes during the nineteen twenties, even if the Swaraj Party had offered its fullest co-operation.

While evaluating the role of the Swaraj Party, it is as important to see its impact on nationalist politics as on British policy. The rise of the party appeared to most contemporaries, and even to later historians, as a revolt against Gandhi's leadership, and methods. The plea of Das and Motilal Nehru, that they were only extending the Gandhian doctrine of non-cooperation to a new field, was received with much scepticism. The No-Changers in the Congress had no doubt that the Swarajists were regressing into the ineffectual constitutionalism of the pre-Gandhian era. The leaders of the Liberal Party — despite the blows it suffered in 1923 election — saw in the advent of the Swaraj Party a vindication of their own policy of constitutional agitation. The viceroy and his advisers drew such comfort as they could from the possibility that the Swarajists would ultimately slide into the safe grooves of constitutional and collaborationist politics. Curiously enough, some of the prominent Swarajists themselves, such as S. Satyamurti and M.R. Jayakar, looked forward to the day when their party would give up the tactics of obstruction in favour of 'responsible association' with the government.

Das and Motilal had to wage a hard struggle for survival within the Indian National Congress. Between them and the No-Changers there was a war to the knife. The Swarajist fortunes touched their nadir at the Gaya Congress in December 1922. But Das and Motilal did not waver in their resolve to enter the councils and at the same time not to be squeezed out of the Congress. The moment of truth came for them in 1924 after Gandhi's release, but they stood up to the Mahatma. For some months Congress politics were in an extremely fluid state, and there was great tension and uncertainty; Gandhi could have, if he wished, outvoted them. But he set his face firmly against a split in the party. Deep down he had (as Mahadev Desai noted) 'the faith that, tired like a broken soldier come for rest, the Swarajists will be disillusioned one day and return to his camp.'¹⁰³ In retrospect, his handling of the Swarajists seems a superb example of the application of his principle of non-violent resistance. He decided to step aside, and let the Swarajists try out their methods without any let or hindrance. At the Belgaum Congress he handed over the Congress organization on a platter to Das and Motilal,

and voluntarily retired from what passed for active politics. He persuaded his faithful followers, the No-Changers, to do the same, and to concentrate on the 'constructive programme' — the promotion of khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity, and the campaign against untouchability. This was a programme for which the Swarajists had little aptitude. He told the No-Changers to keep their hands off any matter relating to the Swaraj Party. His remarkable self-abnegation comes out in a letter written by the Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee to Motilal Nehru in July 1926:

As you know our No-Change colleagues in the Executive and the Special Committee have throughout not given votes on any matter circulated to them either in connection with the business of the Working Committee or of the Special Committee. In fact Mahatma Gandhi wrote to me some time ago that although I was circulating all the papers to him, I should remember the understanding that he was not expected to vote or take part in any of the business we are dealing in relation to the councils.¹⁰⁴

Das and Motilal thus had a *carte blanche* from Gandhi, but party management proved more difficult than they had anticipated. Das, though president of the party, confined his activities largely to Bengal. Motilal's ability, integrity, courage and national stature were great assets for an all-India role, but even he had many anxious moments. He had to deal with rebels like C.S. Ranga Iyer, who had to be expelled from the party by the Congress Working Committee.¹⁰⁵ He had to suffer pinpricks from ambitious colleagues like Srinivas Iyengar. He did not get on at all well with V.J. Patel, who was not an easy man to work with. But Motilal was clearly wrong in March 1926, when he expected Patel to leave the Speaker's Chair and walk out with the Swaraj Party. With Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar, Lajpat Rai and Malaviya, Motilal's differences were more ideological than personal. Motilal was accused of being domineering and arrogant. When in 1925 in the wake of the Tambe affair, he spoke of lopping off Maharashtra, as 'the diseased limb' of the Swaraj Party, he had good reasons for it. After all, there was a limit to compromises which a political party, committed to a struggle against imperialism could afford, Office acceptance, with powerless legislatures under the system of dyarchy, would have reduced the Swaraj Party to a collaborationist group. And since the Swarajists formed the political wing of the Congress in the 1920s, a heavy blow would have been dealt to the Congress potential as an anti-colonial force.

What with the frailties of his own partymen, conflicting ambitions of other groups in councils and the ingenuity of the British officials, Motilal found his task of leading the Swaraj Party increasingly burdensome. He came to value Gandhi's advice. The Mahatma, even in retirement,

remained the ultimate court of appeal for the leaders of the Swaraj Party as well as for its dissidents. V.J. Patel, Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar and Lajpat Rai, even when they were at odds with Motilal could unburden themselves to the Mahatma, As for Motilal, he sought Gandhi's assistance — which was invariably and unreservedly given — whether for concluding a concordat with the No-Changers, or for containing the Responsivist rebellion, for combating the communal contagion or for reconciling the rank and file of the party to its liquidation on the eve of the Salt Satyagraha.

It was customary in the middle twenties to dismiss Gandhi as a 'spent bullet', and to label his politics as visionary. However, behind his seeming obscurities and contradictions there was a remarkable clearness of perception and consistency of method. The total perspective in which he saw the policies of the British Government, the work of the Swaraj Party and his own work may be glimpsed in his reaction to a hectoring speech by Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India:

He [Birkenhead] thinks that non-cooperation was a dreadful mistake. The vast majority of us think that it alone has awakened this sleeping nation from its torpor, it alone has given the nation a force whose strength is beyond measure. The Swaraj Party is a result of that force.

Whilst Motilalji will be fighting in the Assembly and leading the Swaraj Party in the place of Deshbandhu [C.R. Das], I shall be leaving no stone unturned to prepare the atmosphere needed for civil resistance — a vocation for which I seem to be more fitted than for any other.¹⁰⁶

In December 1926, a chastened Motilal had told the Gauhati Congress that 'the Councils were mere automatons in the hands of the Government unless the force of public opinion made the Government yield.'¹⁰⁷

The resumption of the Congress leadership by Gandhi and the imminence of another mass movement after the Lahore Congress led to the liquidation of the Swaraj Party, the historic function of which had been to fill the political vacuum between two Gandhian struggles.

The Swarajist experiment was really not as barren as it seemed to the Congress leadership in 1929. It had failed to achieve its original objective of 'wrecking the constitution' from within, but it had provided a useful forum for propaganda when nationalist politics were at a low ebb. The Swarajists succeeded in periodically raising the political temperature and putting the government on the defensive. Some of them revealed parliamentary gifts of a high order. Motilal Nehru proved an outstanding Leader of the Opposition. Lajpat Rai, Jayakar, Chamanlall, T.C. Goswami, Govind Ballabh Pant and Satyamurti were more than a match for some of the high British officials who manned the Treasury

Benches. V.J. Patel presided over the Legislative Assembly with great panache and skill; though he had formally ceased to be a Swarajist, he regarded himself as a guardian of the nationalist cause and stretched the rules of parliamentary procedure to the utmost to keep the powerful executive at bay.

Most of the issues which dominated the legislative debates of those days seem remote and academic today, but the experience gained by the Swarajists in the twenties came handy when the Congress accepted office in 1937. Ironically the chief protagonists of council-entry and office acceptance in the thirties were the leaders of the No-Changers, C. Rajagopalachari and Vallabhbhai Patel. Reluctant and sporadic as the initiation of Congress leadership had been into the parliamentary processes, it helped to link the Congress of the Gandhian era with the constitutional tradition of the Dadabhai Naoroji-Pherozeshah Mehta-Gokhale era. It also undoubtedly contributed to the consensus in favour of the parliamentary system when independent India's constitution came to be framed.

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	<i>Swarajists elected</i>	<i>Elected members</i>	<i>Official & Nominated</i>	<i>Total No. of Members</i>
Central Legislative				
Assembly	45	101	44	145
Assam	18	38	15	53
Bombay	14	86	28	114
Bihar & Orissa	12	76	27	103
Central Provinces				
& Berar	41	54	19	73
UP	30	100	23	123
Bengal	47	114	26	140
Madras	11	98	29	127
Punjab	12	71	23	94

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Bengal	37	114	26	140
Madras	41	98	29	127
Punjab	3	71	23	94

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Chapter III

The Struggle for Purna Swaraj (1930-1935)

S.N. Qanungo

1. Introduction

THE EPIC DIMENSIONS of the mass upsurges which flowed from the Gandhian satyagraha in 1930 have a compulsive fascination, not only for the odyssey and classic confrontation of Mahatma Gandhi with an alien raj, the apocalyptic novelty of his message,¹ and the transformation of the Indian National Congress from a movement into a party,² but also because they reveal elements of continuity and change in the anti-imperialist struggle, operations of colonial restraints, divergent thought patterns and dialectics of leaders, new political stances, richly ambiguous motives, major contradictions in the internal face of the movements, elite pressures, pressures from below,³ complex inter-relations of caste and class, patterns of radicalization, horizontal mobilizations,⁴ the myth of an all-embracing movement and, above all, intimations of freedom.⁵ It would be an oversimplification to present the Civil Disobedience Movement as a monolithic struggle⁶ conducted by Mahatma Gandhi, as hagiographical accounts have portrayed it. Different strands entered the mass movements in the 1930s, and not all of them were organized in terms of the idiom and style of Gandhian politics. But it cannot be denied that it was the aroma of Mahatma Gandhi's personality which added new dimensions to India's struggle for *purna swaraj*: At the centre of the stage stands that 'messianic figure' who walked philosophically with his head in the clouds but with his feet firmly on the ground, though there are many attractive figures who stand silhouetted against the dark background of the 'second continental movement'.⁷ India was patiently awaiting his clarion call to freedom-fighters: 'The call of 1920 was a call for preparation. The call of 1930 is for engaging in final conflict.'⁸ Then followed the mass upsurge like a tidal wave surging forward strewing flotsam and jetsam on the beach of our political life and then receding — and as the *Unity* stated, 'the British Empire was quivering like a great ship struck by a tidal wave'.⁹

Although *purna swaraj* (complete independence) as an idea was first voiced by Jawaharlal Nehru most articulately, the credit of holding out the 'Nehru ethos' to the masses as an organized reality belongs to Gandhiji. It is also significant that in the Lahore Congress of 1929 it was Gandhiji who moved the main resolution on independence and civil disobedience and Motilal Nehru who seconded it. In his presidential address at that session, Jawaharlal appealed to Gandhiji to lead the nation in the struggle for *purna swaraj* and said, 'He is the one leader in whom the masses have faith. He it is who commands nation-wide respect and affection.'¹⁰ After listening to the criticisms of Madan Mohan Malaviya, M.S. Aney, Kelkar, Satyamurti and Subhas Chandra Bose against Gandhiji's resolution on independence, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta put the question in the open session: 'Do you have in India today any other leader who can lead the country to victory than Mahatma Gandhi?' The question was greeted with cries of 'No, No.' Subhas Chandra Bose, who pointed out Gandhiji's lack of plans for an effective campaign, described the Lahore Session as a great victory for the Mahatma.¹¹ Gandhiji spoke of civil disobedience for establishing *purna swaraj* as a process of 'developing internal strength', 'not designed to establish independence but to arm the people with the power to do so'.¹² In the mass upsurge salt proved the initial vital catalyst,¹³ and the first impulse of the British Government was to laugh at the idea that the emperor could be unseated by boiling sea-water in a kettle. But in fact it was the beginning of an extraordinary struggle which had no parallel in history.¹⁴ S. Gopal observes, 'there was, in fact, no social class or group that did not participate at the call of Gandhi, in this display of nationalist emotion, whose intensity was expected to impress, if not to convert the British. It was a political revolution rare only in that it was based not on hatred of the foreigner, but on faith in human nature, not on fear but on hope.'¹⁵ It is interesting to note that Gramsci in 1933 made a passing reference to Gandhism in his Prison Notebooks as a naive theorization of the passive resolution with religious overtones.¹⁶ It was not possible for him to understand the dynamics of the civil disobedience movement from a distance. Gandhiji's impact on this epic of 'war'¹⁷ and peace was indeed unique. He touched, as no leader before him had ever done, the traditional springs of emotion.¹⁸ Lord Willingdon, the then viceroy, who referred to Gandhiji in 1932 as 'the most Machiavellian bargaining political humbug',¹⁹ wrote to the Secretary of State (Samuel Hoare) on 1 July 1933:

Gandhi is the most astute politician in India and the acknowledged leader of the party whose aim is independence, or at least a constitution with no effective safeguards, and which will place all real power in the hands of Congress. The Congress may change its tactics, but they will never change

their objects. It is vital that these considerations should be borne firmly in mind whatever may be the twists and turns of the Congress manoeuvre.

This shows the 'Gandhian Transformation' of the Indian National Congress, a fundamental transformation of the Congress by reorganizing it as a political party, by establishing its link with the peasantry by trying 'to work from bottom upwards',²⁰ drawing together Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other communities in urban demonstrations and rural agitations against the British raj. In order to make the Congress party the authentic spokesman of the people of India, Gandhiji urged the necessity of building nationwide grassroots organizations for social support. Thus he brought about the structural transformation of the Congress organization. The Independence Resolution was no doubt due to the impact of Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress left theoretical radicalism, but this extremist challenge could find expression only through Gandhiji, who transformed the Congress into a mass organization. Jawaharlal's vision and idea of combining socialism and national revolution under Gandhiji's leadership was a new strategy for the intensification of the political movement against alien domination. As R.G. Moore says, 'the 1930 satyagraha was to be not merely the way to achieve Indian freedom but also the means of creating national unity, of bridging the gaps that separated disparate interests and communities'.²¹ Gandhiji also spoke of 'personal transformation' for the attainment of swaraj and devoted himself to constructing a solid foundation for the reformation of public life and the social foundation of swaraj through the Congress organization. But his 'swing towards the left' in the Lahore Congress of 1929 shows that the 'Gandhian Transformation' also implied the interaction of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian milieu.²²

2. The Purna Swaraj Resolution: Perspectives and Problems

Jawaharlal Nehru tried to revolutionize the character of the Congress by sponsoring and pushing through a resolution advocating complete independence in the 42nd session of the Congress at Madras in 1927. It was not, however, the first formulation of the kind to be placed before the Congress. Similar proposals had been defeated in 1926 and earlier sessions. At the Gauhati Congress (December 1926), Gandhiji pointed out that the moving of the full independence resolution betrayed the impatience of some ardent Congressmen who had lost faith in British justice and this was pardonable in the existing circumstances. He warned them not 'to bite off more than they could chew' and urged the Congress to make it abundantly clear that India wished to remain as imperial partners if this permitted equality and the evolution of true swaraj.²³ Gandhiji thought that the rejection of the full independence resolution was

proof of the sanity of the Congress. He wrote in *Young India*, 'Year after year, a resolution is moved in the Congress to amend the Congress creed so as to define Swaraj as complete independence, and year after year, happily, the Congress throws out the resolution by an overwhelming majority.'²⁴ Jawaharlal and the ginger group in the Congress wanted Indian politics to emerge out of the doldrums of the mid-twenties. Jawaharlal found Gandhiji's presidential address at Belgaum and his advocacy of the spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability rather uninspiring.²⁵ At Jawaharlal's request the Gauhati Congress nominated him as its delegate to the Brussels Conference (Congress of Oppressed Nationalities). Jawaharlal wrote to Srinivasa Iyengar, the Congress President, to ask whether he might define 'swaraj' as independence in the Brussels Conference. He pointed out that the word had been vaguely employed in Congress resolutions. It has to be noted in this context that Srinivasa Iyengar was the rival of Motilal Nehru whose advocacy of policies of non-participation in the councils offered nothing to Tamil Nadu Congressmen.²⁶ 'I have seen your letter to Srinivasa Iyengar,' Motilal told Jawaharlal. 'You are quite right in saying that you cannot put the case for India any lower than the people of other countries do. Saklatwala [Communist] M.P. is here and is making great fun of Dominion Status theory. It is of course unnecessary for you to mention it. We [the Congress] ask for Swaraj and you can interpret it to mean independence, as indeed it is.'²⁷

At the Brussels Congress, Jawaharlal was much impressed by Ernest Toller, a young German poet and dramatist with a blazing passion for truth and freedom. He came into contact with many radical nationalists, socialists and communists and met George Lansbury, Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland and Madame Sun Yat Sen. He got an insight into the inner conflicts of the western labour world and Afro-Asian nationalist movements. Like a typical radical socialist, Jawaharlal spoke against imperialism with special reference to the rising imperialism of the United States which was acquiring a stronghold in Central and South America. As a mark of honour to the Indian National Congress and the Indian National Movement he represented, Jawaharlal was elected to the presidium of the Conference. Subsequently he served on the nine-man Executive Committee of the League against Imperialism. According to R.C. Gupta, it was at the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held at Brussels early in February 1927, that the goals of national independence and social reforms got linked inextricably in Jawaharlal's mind.²⁸ From Europe Jawaharlal returned to India via Colombo in order to attend the 42nd Session of the Congress at Madras in December 1927.

The Madras Congress was a turning point in the history of the Indian National Congress.²⁹ The snap resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru

that the goal of the Congress should be complete independence was passed almost unanimously. The resolution reads: 'The Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence.' His explanation of this resolution was: 'It means complete independence. It means control of the defence forces and industry . . . control over relations with . . . foreign countries. . . . Without these things independence would be a travesty and camouflage. . . .'³⁰ Judith Brown says that Gandhiji played 'no part' in the Madras Congress,³¹ but he exerted private and political pressure in favour of Dr M.A. Ansari as the president.³² Gandhiji attended the session of the Madras Congress but took no part in its proceedings. He did not like the independence resolution of Jawaharlal, who wrote in his *Autobiography* in this context: 'I am inclined to think that he disliked them, not so much because of what they said, but because of their general trend and outlook.'³³ Motilal Nehru, who was in Europe at that time, was opposed to the independence resolution for two reasons. Firstly, he thought that it would split the Congress. Secondly, he felt that it would alienate 'Congress peripheral political groups' (Liberals, Nationalists and Independents like Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and M.A. Jinnah). In early 1927, Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal: 'I do not think there is one man among the old or the new sort of Congressmen who will not go into a fainting fit on hearing the words "complete independence for India".'³⁴ But to his embarrassed surprise, Jawaharlal found almost unanimous support for the independence resolution at Madras. Srinivasa Iyengar, while supporting the resolution, said, 'First we believed in the British officials as a whole, then in the higher officials; then in the Viceroy; then in the British Government; then in Parliament; then in the Labour Party. All have failed. Now we only believe in our own efforts.'³⁵ Mrs Annie Besant remarked in the Subjects Committee that the independence resolution was a dignified and clear statement of India's goal. Jawaharlal, however, thought that his resolution was passed because either it was not understood or many Congressmen wanted to get rid of this 'academic resolution' by passing it and move on to something more important.³⁶ This became apparent when Congress delegates rejected supplementary clauses defining it to mean immediate and complete British withdrawal. The Congress creed of swaraj remained undefined and unchanged. But other resolutions passed in the Madras session represented a new outlook. For example, the Congress affiliated with the International League against Imperialism, supported the struggle of the Chinese people against the Japanese and decided upon the boycott of the Simon Commission. Dr M.A. Ansari, president of the Madras session, referred to 'a free and self-governing India' as the best guarantee for the freedom of Asia and the peace of the world. The Congress Working Committee was directed to draft a 'Swaraj Constitution' in consultation with the Liberals

and other parties. Most of the Congress leaders were in favour of Dominion Status. Jawaharlal's independence resolution did not signify any major change in their attitude. He genuinely felt that the Indian National Congress needed to adopt a revolutionary attitude and break with the past. Dominion Status had the disadvantage of being the culmination of an evolutionary process though it might contain the substance of independence.

Jawaharlal's independence resolution irritated Gandhiji who remarked:

The Congress satisfies itself by repeating year after year resolutions of this character when it knows it is not capable of carrying them into effect. By passing such resolutions we make an exhibition of our impotence, become the laughing stock of the critics and invoke the contempt of our advocacy, the Congress cannot become the irresistible force it was and intended to be, if its resolutions are ill-conceived and are to remain paper resolutions. We have almost sunk to the level of a schoolboy's debating society.³⁶

Gandhiji rebuked Jawaharlal for playing into the hands of 'mischief-makers and hooligans'³⁷ and not coolly thinking out the whole situation. On 17 January 1928, Gandhiji wrote to Jawaharlal:

The difference between you and me appear to be so vast and so radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us. I cannot conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and so honest, as you have always been; but in serving a cause, comradeships have got to be sacrificed. The cause must be held superior to all such considerations. But this dissolution of comradeship — if dissolution must come — in no way affects our personal intimacy.³⁸

Jawaharlal replied: 'Am I not your child in politics, though perhaps a truant and errant child?'

J. Coatman, an ex-police officer, described Jawaharlal 'as a fisher whenever the waters are troubled'. He observed, 'An ex-member of the Harrow School Cadet Corps and once an ardent Anglophile, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has now a secret ambition, which is to rival Lenin or Stalin in the history of Communism.' About Subhas Chandra Bose, Coatman's view was as follows: 'It seems, that history will write him [Nehru] down as a pinch-beck Lenin, and he has a younger and dangerous rival for the plaudits of the role in a would-be Mussolini in Bengal. Mr Subhas Chandra Bose holds the Bengal extremists in his aide.'³⁹ Curiously enough, Subhas Chandra called Jawaharlal and himself 'moderate',⁴⁰ though they were known as Left-wingers or Young Turks. The 'two rising stars of the Congress Left' were closely associated with youth movements and the trade union movement. Subhas Chandra

hailed the youth movements of Germany, Italy, Russia and China. In 1928, Jawaharlal presided over a Socialist Youth Congress which called for independence as a necessary preliminary to communistic society. Jawaharlal also became president of a Republican Congress at Madras which demanded complete independence, passed resolutions hailing the Italian labour martyrs of the USA (Sacco and Vanzetti) as well as Alluri Sitaram Raju, and called for close links with the League against Imperialism. Both Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra addressed numerous youth conferences and carried on active propaganda in favour of independence. Since 1927 complete independence as India's goal was re-affirmed by them in the provincial conferences of Punjab, Delhi and UP. Both organized the independence for India League as 'a pressure group'⁴¹ within the Congress to carry on the 'Sinn Fein Policy'.⁴² Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra created that dominant mood which was responsible for the left swing of Mahatma Gandhi — a vital factor in the struggle for *purna swaraj*. They revealed the growing strength of the radical forces in the Indian National Congress. Subhas Chandra expressed the dominant mood while addressing a Youth Congress in Calcutta in December 1928: 'The youths of India are no longer content with handing over all responsibility to their old leaders and sitting with folded hands or following like dumb driven cattle. They have realised that it is for them to create a new India — an India free, great and powerful.'

As the struggle for *purna swaraj* has been described as a struggle guided by 'the head of Gandhi and the voice of Jawaharlal',⁴³ it is necessary to understand their thought-patterns and the interaction of their dialectics. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to combine socialism and the Indian Nationalist stream so as to intensify the political movement in India under Congress leadership. But it was nationalism which always dominated his political thinking. Jawaharlal's *Autobiography* reveals that in his formative years he was conscious of the humiliation which the Indians were suffering at the hands of the alien rulers. He sympathized with the Boers and the Irish Sinn Fein movement, hailed Japan's victory against Russia as 'a great pick-me-up' for Asia. Everything revolutionary, like the French Revolution and the exploits of Garibaldi, Cavour and Mazzini, fascinated his sensitive mind. During his stay in England he evinced interest in the Extremist challenge in India. But the most persistent and dominant idea was that of Indian freedom.⁴⁴ As Jawaharlal records: 'Nationalistic ideas filled my mind. I mused of Indian freedom and Asiatic freedom from thralldom of Europe. I dreamt of brave deeds, of honour; sword in hand, I would fight for India and help in freeing her.'⁴⁵ At the end of 1912, Jawaharlal attended a Congress session for the first time at Bankipore and he joined the United Provinces

Congress organization in 1913. His first meeting with Gandhiji occurred in 1916 at the Lucknow Congress and he found the Mahatma 'very distant and different and unpolitical'. He was more moved by the eloquent speeches of Mrs Sarojini Naidu in Allahabad, which were 'all nationalism and patriotism, pure and simple.' Jawaharlal writes: 'I was a pure nationalist, my vague socialist ideas of college days having sunk into the background . . . they were vague ideas, more humanitarian and utopian than scientific.' He was filled with enthusiasm when Gandhiji launched his non-violent agrarian struggles in Champaran and Kheda in 1917-18. As Gandhiji described it, the Champaran Satyagraha was 'the first direct object lesson in civil disobedience'; when Gandhiji protested against the Rowlatt Bills and called them 'lawless laws' in 1919.

Jawaharlal wanted to join the Satyagraha Sabha immediately. But Motilal was against this idea. Secretly he slept on the floor to get an idea of what Jawaharlal would have to face in gaol. Night after night Jawaharlal wandered about alone, tortured in mind and groping for an answer to self-questioning about his future. However, Gandhiji counselled Jawaharlal not to take any step that would upset his father.

Jawaharlal was puzzled by Gandhiji's policy of returning 'madness with sanity' and insistence on the acceptance of the Montford Reforms at the Amritsar Congress of 1919 which was presided over by Motilal Nehru. Jawaharlal also did not share Gandhiji's enthusiasm for the Khilafat cause. But he welcomed, as Motilal did, Gandhiji's non-cooperation programme in the Nagpur and Calcutta sessions of 1920. Jawaharlal was excited by Gandhiji's changing the Congress goal from 'Self-government within the Empire' to 'the attainment of swaraj', and also by the Mahatma's transforming the Congress from largely a group of upper and middle class urban intellectuals into a nation-wide democratic mass organization.

But Jawaharlal felt that Gandhiji did not encourage clear thinking about the concept of swaraj and was 'delightfully vague' on the subject. The word *swaraj* was deliberately chosen, as Lala Lajpat Rai observed in the Calcutta session of 1920, for its ambiguity in order to enable Indians to remain within the projected Commonwealth or leave it according to their choice.⁴⁶ Yet Jawaharlal could not deny that the magic word, *swaraj*, had been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians.

The years of disillusionment descended on Nehru when the first wave of civil disobedience broke down on the rock of Gandhiji's insistence on the 'Inner Voice'. Jawaharlal could never accept the validity of that voice which responded to God as well new experiences, including 'business pressures'.

When Jawaharlal was torn between contending urges, with his leanings to the left, his sympathies lay with Gandhiji and the No-Changers. He doubted the value of a conditional approach in the anti-imperialist struggle. His strange and unexpected experience in the Gurdwara movement in the state of Nabha (1923) and as the President of the Allahabad municipality (from 1923 to 1925) confirmed his belief that the British Government had no sympathy either with the masses or national aspirations.

Jawaharlal felt unhappy over the personal and factional dissensions at the Cocanada session (1923). The only redeeming feature in that session is the foundation of the Hindustani Seva Dal (a countrywide volunteer organization). Dr N.S. Hardikar, the initiator of this movement, received the enthusiastic support of Jawaharlal. In the long negotiations at Juhu between Gandhiji (after his release from jail on 5 February 1924), Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal observed the basic differences of their viewpoints. The differences came to a head at the Ahmedabad meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in the last week of June 1924. Jawaharlal wrote: 'I also returned from Juhu a little disappointed for Gandhiji did not resolve a single one of my doubts. As is usual with him, he refused to look into the future, or lay down any long-distance programme.'⁴⁷ Gandhiji's presidential address at Belgaum in 1924 — the shortest one ever delivered at a Congress session — struck Jawaharlal as being very uninspiring. He continued as the secretary of the Congress, though he had to devote more time to his family affairs. He had to take his wife Kamala for treatment to Switzerland in March 1926. One of the highlights of his European sojourn was his participation in the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held at Brussels early in February 1927. From Europe he returned to India to attend the 42nd Session of the Congress at Madras and move his complete independence resolution. Jawaharlal did this because it appeared to him that Gandhiji's definition of India's political goal as 'a federation of friendly interdependent states' rather than independence was cryptic and confusing. However, the thought-patterns of Jawaharlal clearly indicated that, in spite of some differences in their political outlook, he never rose in open revolt against Gandhian nationalism. In fact, often he felt considerably excited by Gandhian ideology. Gandhiji's impact on Jawaharlal is evident from the following observation in *Discovery of India*:

Gandhi was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and

their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all of you who live by their exploitation, get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery . . . the essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. We did not grow much more truthful, perhaps, than we had been previously, but Gandhi was always there as a symbol of uncompromising honesty to pull us up and shame us into truth.⁴⁸

Jawaharlal was the first Congress president who declared himself a socialist. But he was not a pioneer in socialist thought in India. He admitted that he had advanced painfully, step by step, 'where many others had gone ahead blazing a trail'⁴⁹ in a socialist direction. Jawaharlal had genuine sympathy for the Soviet society and the Soviet experiment of 1917. He paid a glowing tribute to Lenin which resembled his estimate of Mahatma Gandhi.⁵⁰ He also confessed that he had no doctrinal adherence to Marxism, though he was undoubtedly influenced by Marx's scientific method of evaluating social and economic phenomena.⁵¹ In 1927, Jawaharlal was exposed to the views of many communists, socialist and radical nationalists from Afro-Asian countries. He was annoyed with the British socialists for their equivocal attitude to the question of Indian independence. Jawaharlal thought that the communists, who raised their voice against European imperialism, were at least not hypocritical. A brief visit to Moscow in 1927 shaped Jawaharlal's attitude towards communism. He realized the necessity of controlled production and distribution of wealth for the public good in India, of redefining swaraj in terms of the masses and linking social freedom with political emancipation. He was of the opinion that there should not be room for uncontrolled private enterprise in an underdeveloped country like India. But at the same time Jawaharlal did not want the wholesale application of Marxism to India. He admitted unblushingly: 'I am a typical bourgeois. Communists have called me a petty-bourgeois with perfect justification.'⁵² Yet Jawaharlal worked with the leading communists like Bhupendranath Dutt, Muzaffar Ahmad and S.A. Dange who greatly appreciated his proposal that the All India Trade Union Congress affiliate with the Brussels League.

A vague socialism was already in the air when Jawaharlal returned to India after attending the Brussels Congress in 1927. In 1926, Acharya Narendra Deva and Dr Sampurnanand, who were members of the UP Provincial Congress Committee, tried to draw up a mild socialist programme for UP to deal with local agrarian problems. Many of the prominent socialists like Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meharally, Mascarenas, C.K. Narayanswami, Dr Sampurnanand and Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya had good

contacts with Jawaharlal and initially relied heavily on him. Many of them led the anti-Simon demonstrations. It was Yusuf Meharally, the Socialist, who coined the famous slogan 'Simon go back'.⁵³ It is significant that the socialists sympathized with Jawaharlal's demand for *purna swaraj* and took prominent part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.⁵⁴

Jawaharlal's wanderings and tramping the dusty pot-holed roads of the Pratapgarh district with a wet towel round his head in the summer of 1920 revealed to him a picture of the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India.⁵⁵ It created in him a strong urge to work in a socialist direction. He saw no way of ending the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. Jawaharlal unequivocally maintained that the only solution to the problems of India lay in socialism. He used the word not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific sense. Jawaharlal said: 'Socialism is something even more than an economic doctrine; it is a philosophy of life and as such it appeals to me.' He was aware that socialism involved the ending of the capitalist order of the profit system, vested interests, the feudal and autocratic system, and change in our instincts, habits and desires — in short, revolutionary changes in India's social and political structure. Jawaharlal hammered on one basic theme — the twin goals of the nationalist movement must be complete independence and socialism. Political independence must be attained to attain economic freedom. Capitalism and imperialism must be eradicated. Jawaharlal wished the peasants and the urban proletariat to join the freedom movement. As a socialist, he was not happy to see the Congress dominated by the middle class, as a bourgeois institution, favouring the capitalists and landlords against the peasantry and labour. He supported the Eka Andolan of the peasants and accused the leaders of the Swaraj Party of favouring the urban and rural bourgeoisie. Under the influence of Jawaharlal, the Provincial Congress Committee of UP passed a resolution in April 1928 stating: 'We can no longer make any progress by the cry of Swaraj only. We must make it clear that we aim at the economic, social as well as political Swaraj.' Jawaharlal's socialistic professions and radicalism became a source of irritation to Motilal, Gandhiji and the right wing of the Congress.⁵⁶ This created tension in Anand Bhawan. Jawaharlal wrote: 'I do not think that any previous or subsequent tension between Jawaharlal and Motilal had been so great.' About Jawaharlal and his firebrand associates Motilal said: 'Pure idealism completely divorced from realities has no place in politics and is but a happy dream, which must sooner or later end in a rude awakening . . . the masses want bread. They have no time for theories and dogmas imported from abroad.' Early in 1928, Gandhiji wrote to Jawaharlal: 'You are going too fast, you should have taken time to think and become acclimatised.'

Despite his socialist orientation, Jawaharlal never forgot that Gandhiji was his political mentor. From him he received extraordinary consideration and affection. Motilal and Gandhiji held each other in the highest esteem despite their differences in outlook. Motilal maintained that Gandhiji was 'the most revered Indian of the day' and that the satyagraha movement was a new force with tremendous potentialities. The interaction of Nehru and Gandhiji in the Indian milieu and India's struggle for purna swaraj was made possible by the links of mutual esteem between Sabarmati Ashram and Anand Bhawan. Jawaharlal's search for humanism in Marxism led him to accepting even the concept of 'spiritual regeneration' which had been the crux of Gandhian philosophy. Jawaharlal and his socialist associates could not free themselves totally from some established values of Gandhian ideology. For instance, Jawaharlal's nationalism like that of the Mahatma was free from hatred. He thought of internationalism in the context of nationalism.⁵⁷ Both Jawaharlal and Gandhiji represented a link between various sets of ideas and emphasized the essential unity inside the Congress and outside in the anti-imperialist struggle. Jawaharlal called himself a socialist, but he actually acted as a link between the right and left. Gandhiji called him his 'favourite son' and 'heir-apparent'. Gandhiji knew that Jawaharlal was 'the only person who could bridge the gap between Socialism and Gandhism',⁵⁸ and Jawaharlal also knew that a mass campaign without Gandhiji was impossible. Gandhiji wanted to heal the cleavage between the generations through Jawaharlal and expressed his feeling in these words: 'I know that I am not keeping pace with the march of events. There is a hiatus between the rising generation and me.'⁵⁹

It is necessary to understand the reasons for Gandhiji's objection to Jawaharlal's snap proposal of complete independence in the Madras session of the Congress in 1927. Why was he so pessimistic about the reality of a mass campaign? Sumit Sarkar tells us that 'there was not a ripple of protest anywhere in India'⁶⁰ as Gandhiji went to jail on 10 March 1922 after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement. But in fact on 19 March 1920, the Madras Liberal League passed a resolution condemning Gandhiji's arrest and the award of a six-year jail sentence; on 1 May 1920, the Indian Merchants' Chamber appealed to the Government of Bombay to give Gandhiji most considerate treatment in prison and, above all, on 18 May 1920, Gandhi Day was celebrated all over India. It appears that Gandhiji opposed the cry for complete independence at that stage on the grounds discussed below.

First, in the existing circumstances, Jawaharlal's resolution was unlikely to be given effect to as the majority of the Congress leaders were in favour of dominion status. This became apparent when the Madras Congress directed the Congress Working Committee to draft a Swaraj

Constitution, and in February 1928 an All Parties Conference met in Delhi with Dr Ansari in the chair and voted for full responsible government. The All Parties Conference again met at Bombay in May and appointed a sub-committee to determine the principles of the Swaraj Constitution. Motilal and Jawaharlal were the president and secretary of this sub-committee which framed the Swaraj Constitution on the basis of dominion status 'not as a remote stage of our evolution, but as the next immediate step'.

Second, Gandhiji felt that in both Congress and the country the main problems were cohesion and control and that 'irresponsible talk' of complete independence would create new obstacles for the Congress when the Hindu-Muslim unity problem was yet to be solved.

Third, Gandhiji thought that the Congress was yet to become truly representative of the masses. Congress had no sound financial basis. Individual Congressmen and some PCCs owed large debts to the AICC, Gandhiji pointed out to Jawaharlal. In the provinces lower level organization and functioning were non-existent or weak. Local Congress Committees wanted to depend on the proceeds of Gandhiji's Khadi Tours as subsidies.⁶¹

Fourth, Gandhiji maintained that the word *swaraj* was all-embracing. It could be understood by the people and it provided for the highest growth of the nation. He said that this vital word (first used by Dadabhai Naoroji) was an all-satisfying goal. Swaraj meant, even under dominion status, a capacity to declare independence at will. Gandhiji said: 'the cryptic meaning of Swaraj, I have often described to be within the empire if possible, without if necessary.'

Lastly, Gandhiji felt that there must be corresponding action adequate to the brave declaration. As he wrote in *Young India* on 12 January 1928: 'Till we can take up the challenge, every single threatening speech or gesture of ours is a humiliation, an admission of impotence. I have seen prisoners in chains spilling frothy oaths, only to provide mirth for their gaolers.'

Gandhiji was the central figure in Congress deliberations during the period 1928-9, and his only object was to keep the Indian National Congress united. Jawaharlal's 'usual vacillation' during this period was due to the fact he responded to Gandhiji's message of essential unity as the only road to swaraj. The Nehru Report, which Motilal described as 'an achievement of which any country in the world might well be proud', ran into difficulties created not only by the supporters of communal claims, but also by the complete independence resolution of Jawaharlal in the Madras session of 1927. In September 1928, Jawaharlal presided over an All Bengal Students' Conference which advocated

complete independence. 'His Excellency fears', the Home Secretary wrote on 18 October 1928, 'that the utterances of Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhiji could transcend the new impulse, rising tempo and, above all, the impending crisis of a major split in the Congress party.'

The dominion status supporters were weakened by the death of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Motilal had serious misgivings about piloting the Swaraj Constitution of the Nehru Report in the face of the opposition of young radicals like Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra. He had been persuaded to agree to preside over the ensuing session of the Congress at Calcutta in December 1928. He made it known that if he did not secure a majority for his report he would resign. According to Judith Brown, by 1927, Motilal was a leader without an all-India following.⁶² But we know that, early in 1924, the most striking figure in the Imperial Legislative Council was Motilal Nehru, the Leader of the Opposition, who was able to enlist the co-operation of Jinnah and Malaviya, thirty Moderates and Muslim members and was able to outvote the government in the open session. K.M. Pannikar aptly contends that India owes its parliamentary traditions to Motilal. According to B.R. Nandas, Motilal's place in Indian politics in the last ten years of his life was second only to that of Gandhiji.⁶³ It has to be noted also that on the eve of the Calcutta session of 1928, Subhas Chandra Bose requested the reluctant Motilal to accept the presidential chair and lead Congressmen in the political crisis. Motilal, anticipating a crisis generated by the controversy about independence versus dominion status, wrote to Gandhiji: 'You have made me sit in the Presidential Chair and put upon my head a crown of thorns, but do not look at my difficulties from a distance.' Gandhiji obeyed Motilal's wish and averted the rift in the Congress by a compromise formula at Calcutta. It was not an easy task for Gandhiji to obtain the support of Congressmen when 'complete independence' was the catchword of young radicals. We have to remember also that before the Calcutta session began over 50,000 mill-workers occupied the pandal and passed a resolution in favour of complete independence. In the open session and the Subjects Committee, Gandhiji said that he would not like to water down the goal of independence, but independence is a thing of sterner stuff. It is not gained by 'the jingling of words'. He added, 'You may take the name of independence as often as you like, as Muslims utter the name of Allah or the pious Hindus utter the name of Krishna or Rama, but all that muttering will be an empty formula if there is no honour behind it.' Gandhiji's resolution on dominion status adopted the Nehru Report while abiding by the Madras resolution on complete independence, with the proviso that if the British Government did not accept the Congress demand by 31 December 1930, the Congress

would opt for complete independence and fight for it, if necessary by invoking the weapon of non-violent civil disobedience.

Jawaharlal suggested that civil disobedience should be launched if complete independence were not granted within a year. He held that acceptance of dominion status was an extremely wrong and foolish act. Gandhiji's resolution was opposed by Subhas Chandra in the plenary session. He moved an amendment calling for immediate reiteration of the purna swaraj objective. He was supported by Jawaharlal, rather half-heartedly, Satyamurti, a large number of delegates from Bengal and the leading Bombay Communists, Nimbkar and Joglekar. The voting on Subhas's amendment — 1,350 against and 973 for — gave a clear majority to Gandhiji's compromise formula which was adopted with deafening shouts of *Bande Mataram* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*. Gandhiji's compromise formula accepted the dominion status objective provided the British Government granted it by the end of 1929.

Jawaharlal's attitude at the Calcutta Congress was rather ambivalent. In July 1929, Jawaharlal had confessed to Gandhiji that the Independence for India League had proved 'a hopeless failure'.⁶⁴ He had failed to make the Congress commit itself unequivocally to the ideology of socialism. He had to pay some respect to the 'political realism of Gandhiji'. He thought that unity was most vital to the success of the nationalist movement and he observed: 'I shall cooperate gladly with all the strength in me, with all those who work for independence, even though they do not agree with the socialist solution.' The Calcutta session was, however, a storm signal. Motilal wrote to Gandhiji: 'Our race is fast dying out and the struggle will sooner or later have to be continued by men of Jawaharlal's type. The sooner they begin the better.' In concluding the Calcutta session, Motilal said: 'Let us work for Swaraj by whatever name we might call it.'⁶⁵

Gandhiji's compromise formula which was passed by the Subjects Committee by 115 votes against 45 offered a year's grace and an ultimatum. His first resolution was altered so as to give the British Parliament a time limit of a year instead of two years. Motilal made a fervent appeal to Congressmen: 'Carry out the programme which Mahatmaji placed before you and which you have accepted. One year is nothing in the history of a nation. I have not the least doubt that the next Congress will see us united and taking another forward step.'

Gandhiji acted as 'a brake on the mounting pressure'⁶⁶ between the Madras Congress and the Lahore Congress of 1929. At the Calcutta Congress Subhas Chandra pointed out the dangers of the younger sections being weaned away by more extreme leadership, if the Congress leaders refused to accommodate them. Even a moderate like

Jatindra Mohan Sengupta impressed on Motilal the importance of changing the creed of the Congress to incorporate the goal of complete independence in the near future. Motilal had made his position abundantly clear in the Calcutta session: 'In my opinion if the British Government mean what they say and help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I, would, therefore strive for Swaraj within the Empire, but would not hesitate to sever all connection if severance becomes a necessity through Britain's own fault, I would thus throw the burden of separation on the British people.'⁶⁷ On the Calcutta ultimatum, Irwin had 'nothing very exciting to say'. In his opinion, the younger men in the Congress accepted the compromise formula of Gandhiji only to place themselves in a better position in a year's time. They knew that the British Government would do nothing within that time.

For Gandhiji the year 1929 was a period of 'waiting and preparation'. Early in 1929, Lord Irwin refused to invite Gandhiji for a serious dialogue, though he was prepared to meet the mahatma at a party. On 19 February 1929, Gandhiji attended the tea party given by Vithalbhai Patel who told Irwin afterwards that the mahatma was quite categorically in favour of the British connection. Gandhiji, however, made it plain that, though he hoped for a peaceful settlement, there could not be much breaking of ice at a private, informal tea party. Irwin heard from C. Setalvad that Gandhiji, Motilal and even Tej Bahadur Sapru did not expect full dominion status for India in the near future.

During 1929 Gandhiji tried to confine Congress activities to constructive work which provided the initial base for civil disobedience. He encouraged activities for redress of specific grievances along Bardoli lines, boycott of foreign goods, and public bonfires of foreign cloth. At the foreign cloth burning demonstration at Calcutta on 4 March 1929, Gandhiji called himself a man mad after freedom. He hoped that India would be able to settle her business (dominion status if it meant a partnership at will on a basis of equality with full freedom for either party to secede) without having resort to civil disobedience. 'Believe me,' he said, 'I shall strain every nerve to avoid that issue.' He warned his audience that the time for civil disobedience had not come. But he asked them to be prepared for the directions of the Congress Working Committee, when the proper time came to break certain laws or all non-moral laws of the country. He urged Indians to have courage and win freedom.

Gandhiji was arrested and awarded a token fine of one rupee. The day of Gandhiji's trial was celebrated by bonfires of foreign cloth all over the country. But he was pessimistic about the viability of a mass campaign because he knew the roots of 'bourgeois hesitations and ambiguities'.

Besides, he was sixty and was out of tune with many Congress leaders. The significance of the Compromise Formula of Gandhiji is to be understood also in the context of his declaration in July 1929: 'It is a gross misrepresentation of the true situation to say that the masses are impatient to be led to civil disobedience, but that I am hanging back. I know well enough how to lead to civil disobedience a people who are prepared to embark upon it on my terms. I see no such sign on the horizon.'⁶⁸

Like Jawaharlal, Gandhiji had little interest in constitution-making endeavours.⁶⁹ He told Arthur Moore: 'I confess to you that neither the statutory Commission nor Constitution-making interests me much.' Gandhiji's compromise formula evoked opposition from the Liberals who did not want to stray from the path of constitutional agitation. Sapru persuaded Gandhiji that the Congress should give the government a chance. Gandhiji replied that he needed something from the government to put Jawaharlal and his fire-brand associates into 'a reasonable and hopeful frame of mind'. In an effort to stave off the impending clash, Irwin declared on 31 October 1929 that it was implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that dominion status was the 'natural issue of India's constitutional progress' and he offered an invitation to Indian leaders to meet representatives of the British Government at a Round Table Conference in London. The Irwin offer created hope of political settlement among Congress and non-Congress leaders. Jawaharlal thought that the ingeniously worded announcement could mean much or very little. Gandhiji told C.F. Andrews that he would do his utmost to smooth the way for Lord Irwin and moderate leaders. But he had his misgivings because the Butler Report (March 1929) had reasserted that 'Paramountcy must remain paramount'. The Liberals were opposed to civil disobedience and they turned to Motilal and Gandhiji as their links with the Congress. Both of them were anxious to find some way out. A Joint Manifesto at Delhi signed by them, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs Besant, Sapru and the Liberals, on 2 November 1929, expressed the deep appreciation of Irwin's efforts and the sincerity underlying the 'Irwin offer'. They were prepared to accept it subject to four conditions: (1) the Round Table Conference should discuss the details of dominion status, not merely the basic principle, which the British Government should accept immediately; (2) the Congress must have effective and majority representation in the Conference; (3) there should be a policy of general conciliation and administration in a more liberal spirit; (4) there should be a general amnesty for political prisoners. Jawaharlal was unhappy as he thought that to give up the demand for complete independence even for a short while or even in theory was improper. In his autobiography he observed that the Joint Manifesto in effect

suggested that the Congress objective of complete independence was a mere tactical affair, something to bargain with, not something which was essential and without which the Congress could never be content.⁷⁰ He described the manifesto as 'a political error'. He at first refused to sign the manifesto but, like Gandhiji, he realized that the Congress could not afford to split on the eve of struggle for purna swaraj. Jawaharlal was persuaded by Gandhiji to sign the Delhi manifesto. As Dr R.C. Majumdar says, 'The intellectual Nehru [Jawaharlal] fought against his [Gandhiji's] programme and theory but the emotional Nehru always submitted to his authority.'⁷¹ Subhas Chandra refused to sign the Delhi Manifesto. Gandhiji declared after the Delhi meeting that he was dying to get the 'real Dominion Status in action' with 'a real change of heart' on the part of the British Government and people. The protracted post mortem of the Irwin offer, the defensive attitude of the Labour government and the debate in the British Parliament were an eye-opener to Jawaharlal. Jawaharlal's presidential address at the All India Trade Union Congress at Nagpur on 30 November 1929, led V.S.S. Sastri to fear that Jawaharlal was going to 'swallow' Gandhiji. Jawaharlal wanted to resign from the Indian National Congress. Meanwhile, Irwin through Jinnah's mediation, had agreed to see Gandhiji. A last-minute effort for political settlement was made by V.J. Patel and Sapru. In the meeting on 23 December 1929 with Gandhiji, Motilal (who represented the Congress), Jinnah and Sapru, Irwin pleaded his inability to give any assurance about dominion status and other major points raised in the Delhi Manifesto. The breakdown of the negotiations set the stage for the adoption of dramatic means of protest by the Congress at the Lahore Congress session of 1929. 'I have burnt my boats,' Gandhiji said.

After the Calcutta session of the Congress, Gandhiji had said that if the Nehru Report were not accepted by the government, he must declare himself an 'independence-wallah'.⁷² The breakdown of the negotiations between Indian leaders and Lord Irwin revealed the truth of Gandhiji's statement that freedom would not descend as a gift from the British. Gandhiji had also maintained earlier: 'In my opinion it cannot lead to any real advance or action unless both are ready. We know that we are not ready. England will never make any advance so as to satisfy India's aspiration till she is forced to.' In the distressing political scene between the Madras session and the Lahore session, Gandhiji's leadership was tried. Jawaharlal, Subhas and the Bihar PCC (Provincial Congress Committee) were in favour of complete independence. Motilal and the Liberals wanted to give the government a chance. Liberal leaders, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Srinivasa Sastri, indicated that they would retire from politics rather than become non-cooperators. The landlords of UP denounced the independence resolution. The Assam

PCC was against an extremist policy. Some Bengal leaders expressed great doubts about boycott. Most of the Muslim leaders, including Jinnah, were positively hostile towards the independence resolution and civil disobedience without a solution of Hindu-Muslim unity problem. Even Dr Ansari and Syed Mahmud wanted to put communal unity before civil disobedience. Gandhiji was caught in the cross-currents of hostility between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. The Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha and the Kirti-Kisan Conference expressed distrust of Congress leadership. Hindu Mahasabha leaders, Madan Mohan Malaviya, N.C. Kelkar, and even Mrs Sarojini Naidu had made known their doubts about the efficacy and righteousness of civil disobedience. Such was the disconcerting lack of cohesion in national politics when the final goal of the freedom struggle was determined at Lahore in 1929.

Events were soon to move fast and to consign the Simon Commission's Report to the dustbin of history along with the Nehru Report. Since Gandhiji alone could lead a mass campaign, he seemed to be the most suitable candidate for the presidency at the Lahore session of 1929. Upton Close (pseudonym of Joseph Washington Hall), in an article in the *New York Times* of 22 December 1929 quoted Gandhiji as saying that he would be relieved if 1 January 1930 dawned with the Congress ultimatum unaccepted by the British and India rendered free of all moral commitments to the British Empire.⁷³ At the Lucknow meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in September 1929, Gandhiji made it abundantly clear that he would not accept his own nomination. In terms of seniority, Vallabhbhai Patel was logically the second choice. But he also withdrew as Gandhiji threw his weight behind Jawaharlal who implored the Mahatma to leave him alone. Though Motilal pressed Jawaharlal's claims on Gandhiji, the latter had two other basic reasons for his choice. First, he wanted to wean Jawaharlal from a drift to the extreme left. Secondly, as the president of the Congress, Jawaharlal would become aware of the necessity of compromise. Beside this, Jawaharlal's nomination would inspire confidence in the younger elements and divert radical youth from communism to the Congress. Also, as Gandhi said, 'Those who know [our] relations know that his [Jawaharlal's] being in the [presidential] chair is as good as my being in it.'

But for Gandhiji, Jawaharlal could not have been elected unanimously at the Lahore Session. He felt hurt at the 'mode of his election'. As he put it later, he climbed to this high office not by the 'main entrance' or even 'a side entrance' but 'by a trap door'. Commenting on the election of Jawaharlal, Sarojini wrote to him on 29 September 1929, 'I wonder if in the whole of India there was yesterday a prouder heart than your father's or a heavier heart than yours.'

Jawaharlal arrived at Lahore, his mother's home town, on 25 December 1929, and received a welcome which, in the words of the *Tribune*, even kings might envy. Lahore wore a festive look, with the streets sparkling with coloured lights, canopied with bunting, and windows, roofs and even trees crowded with spectators. Motilal and Swarup Rani watched the grand procession with their 39-year-old son riding a white charger, followed by a detachment of Congress cavalry. From the balcony of the Bhalla Shoe Company of Anarkali, Motilal and Swarup Rani joined with others in showering flower-petals on their son.⁷⁴

Upton Close presented Jawaharlal as 'the idol of Young India' and *Unity* compared the Lahore Congress with the American Congress of 1776. Jawaharlal in his presidential address declared himself a socialist, republican and a champion of labour and the peasantry. He expressed his marked differences with Gandhiji on the theory of trusteeship and paternalism and the creed of non-violence. He declared that 'swaraj' meant complete independence or complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism. Jawaharlal's address reflected the leftist philosophy and the future ideology of the Congress. But the Lahore Congress of 1929 was also a significant phase of the Gandhian transformation of the Congress Party. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Congress at Lahore was in a cauldron as cross-purposes were at work.⁷⁵

There was little doubt that the proceedings and the execution of the decisions of the Lahore session were guided by Gandhiji. The main resolution on purna swaraj was moved by Gandhiji. He had to push through his resolutions (which included a friendly reference to the Irwin offer and the initial stand of the Congress Working Committee and refused to close the door totally for future negotiations) in the midst of pressures from the right wing and the irreconcilable extreme left wing. Malaviya was in favour of reconvening the All Parties Conference and, like Aney, wanted the Congress to accept the Round Table Conference. Kelkar and Satyamurti favoured council entry. The Liberals and some of Gandhiji's orthodox followers were advocates of dominion status or home rule. Subhas Chandra insisted on 'direct action' and the establishment of parallel governments based on local Congress committees and the effective organizations of workers, peasants and youth. It was chiefly due to Gandhiji's firmness that twelve amendments were voted and lost. He received valuable support from Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and Vishwanathan. The Lahore Congress declared that the acceptance of dominion status in the Nehru Report had lapsed and called upon Congress members in Central and Provincial legislatures to resign. It authorized the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deemed fit, 'to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience Movement including

non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary.' At midnight on 31 December 1929, the Indian National Congress adopted the creed of purna swaraj and unfurled the national tricolour of independence on the bank of the Ravi amidst wild enthusiasm in the Congress camp and cries of *Bande Mataram* and *Inquilab Zindabad*, while Jawaharlal Nehru danced round the flagstaff.⁷⁶

3. Preparations for the Struggle for Purna Swaraj and the 'Dilemmas of Confrontation'⁷⁷

When the clarion call for independence was given in the Lahore session, Jawaharlal found it difficult to foresee what was going to happen. He wrote in his autobiography: 'The wheels had been set moving, but we were still in darkness as to how and when we were to begin.' Motilal, who had quoted a Persian adage, *Herche ke pidarnatwanad, pesar tamam kunud* (what the father is unable to accomplish, the son achieves), while making over charge to Jawaharlal, also made up his mind to obey the clarion call of the country. He wrote to Dr Ansari: 'I hope you will give me the credit of fully realizing what it means to me and mine to throw my lot with Gandhiji in the coming struggle. Nothing but a deep conviction that the time for the greatest effort and the greatest sacrifice has come would have induced me to expose myself at my age and with my physical disabilities, and with my family obligations, to the tremendous risks I am incurring.' Both Motilal and Jawaharlal knew that the lead in the struggle for purna swaraj would be given by Gandhiji, and they waited for the mahatma's move. Motilal individually addressed Congress members of the Assembly, urging them to resign their seats. On 6 January 1930, Jawaharlal called for the celebration of 'Independence Day' on 26 January when the pledge for purna swaraj drafted by him was to be taken. On that day, people were to take a pledge that, 'We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country [ruined India economically, politically, culturally and socially]'.

According to Irwin's biographer, Alan Campbell Johnson, Irwin had seriously considered the banning of the Congress session. He did not accept the advice of the Punjab Government that Jawaharlal and Kitchlew (Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Lahore session) should be prosecuted for making provocative speeches. But Irwin did report to the Secretary of State about the striking effect on the political situation made by the meeting at Lahore. In the USA Senator Blaine of Wisconsin moved a resolution calling for recognition by the USA of the Indian Independence Resolution. On 6 January 1930, Earl Russell, Under-Secretary of State for India, declared that dominion status would

not be immediately granted to India. Gandhiji thanked Irwin for making the issue clear. He told Rabindranath Tagore that he was furiously thinking day and night on the occasion for 'self assertion'.

The first impulse of the government was to ridicule the 'Kindergarten stage of revolution' and Irwin said that the assertion of a goal was not the same thing as attainment. This was the tone of the speeches of Lord Russell, Lord Birkenhead and Lord Winberton in Parliament. Birkenhead described Indian leaders as 'neurotic lawyers' and 'inferior Kerenkys'. As Steward Eddy reported to Irwin on 3 December 1929 that Gandhiji had no concrete plan in mind, the government thought that there would be no dramatic departure in the policy of the Congress — 'an ill-assorted rabble'.

On 10 January 1930, Gandhiji told Jawaharlal: 'Ever since we have separated at Lahore, I have been evolving schemes of civil disobedience. I have not seen my way clear as yet. But I have come so far that in the present state of the Congress no civil disobedience can be or should be offered in its name and that it should be offered by me alone or jointly with a few companions.'⁷⁸ The experience of the Bardoli Satyagraha weighed strongly with Gandhiji as he planned the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Bardoli was essentially a Gandhian satyagraha, although Vallabhbhai Patel did the main organizational work and roused new courage.⁷⁹ According to G.D. Birla, Bardoli put new life into the dividing forces of nationalism, and was an eye-opener and a crucial demonstration of the road to Swaraj.⁸⁰ After his dramatic defiance of the raj⁸¹ in the Lahore session, Gandhiji was disposed to leave the Congress to Jawaharlal, and he wanted to undertake another experiment in Civil Disobedience that would be strictly limited in scope⁸² like the Bardoli Satyagraha. It was to be both a means and an end and Gandhiji's aim was to infuse courage and unity through the corporate action of satyagraha for the ultimate goal of purna swaraj. The guiding factor in this satyagraha was to be Gandhiji's 'Inner Voice'.⁸³ He never wanted to close all doors to negotiations.

One might well ponder, as Dr Tarachand does,⁸⁴ how and why a dynamic personality like Jawaharlal made an abject surrender to Gandhiji. Subhas Chandra Bose tells us that, after Jawaharlal accepted the presidentship of the Congress, he became the consistent and unfailing supporter of Gandhiji.⁸⁵ Subhas Chandra, who had been sentenced on 23 January 1930 to rigorous imprisonment for one year on charges of sedition and conspiracy, was not completely satisfied with Gandhiji's 'swing over' to accepting the left wing's unconditional demand for purna swaraj. It is true that Jawaharlal sometimes found Gandhiji ideologically amazingly backward, like a medieval Christian saint, and did not agree totally with his philosophy of life and idiom of politics. But

he could not deny that Gandhiji represented the real synthesis between nationalism and internationalism; that Gandhiji's creed of satyagraha brought the Congress into direct contact with the Indian peasantry; that Gandhiji gave the Congress a mass character.⁸⁶ Above all, Gandhiji's personality had a definite influence on his mind. 'Gandhiji's brave and effective action, with an ethical halo about it, had an irresistible appeal for Jawaharlal. He found Gandhiji both friendly and courteous and adamant and implacable at the same time. He had seen how, by a gentle look, a soft word and by personal example, Gandhiji could discipline a lazy and demoralized people who had a tradition of inaction and spineless politics. Yet, in the Juhu (Bombay) conversations in 1924, Jawaharlal discovered that there could sometimes be steel in that soft voice and the calm eye could be stony.'⁸⁷ Ravinder Kumar has rightly pointed out that 'the strength of Gandhiji's charisma was his most effective weapon in politics'.⁸⁸

Christian Century, an important Protestant journal of the USA, represented the Lahore Congress as a victory for Gandhiji. *The New York Times* (31 December 1929) remarked that, if the voice of moderation was not altogether lost in the Lahore Congress, it was due to Gandhiji. Jawaharlal knew that, but for Gandhiji he could not have been elected as president of the Congress. Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Jamnalal Bajaj and the whole Old Guard were not willing to play Nehru's tune. They gave Jawaharlal latitude only because of Gandhiji. Some leaders of the right wing felt that by joining the left wing camp, Gandhiji had weakened his position. The interaction of Jawaharlal and Gandhiji gave a dynamic emphasis to the struggle for purna swaraj. According to R.J. Moore, Gandhiji preserved the substantial unity of the Congress by 'bowing to the younger Nehru'.⁸⁹ 'In a way,' Jawaharlal wrote, 'I represented a link between various sets of ideas and so I helped in toning down the differences and emphasised the essential unity of struggle against imperialism.'⁹⁰

Jawaharlal, however, knew that he had not the politician's flair for forming groups and factions.⁹¹ The dilemmas of confrontation became evident when Jawaharlal gave the rallying cry in the Lahore Congress and Gandhiji's plan of civil disobedience movement faced the crisis of credibility and viability. The composition of the Working Committee was Gandhiji's choice — Subhas Chandra and Srinivasa Iyengar were not on his list. Madan Mohan Malaviya, N.C. Kelkar, N.C. Bardoli, C. Khaliquzzaman resigned from the Working Committee. Dr Ansari, Abul Kalam Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Rangaswamy Iyer, Nilkanth Das, M.S. Aney, Syed Mahmud, Satyamurti were not happy with Motilal for supporting Gandhiji's idea of civil disobedience. Businessmen were

thinking of their long-term interests. The Liberals believed in the goodwill of the Labour Government. Dr Ansari wrote long letters to Gandhiji (10 and 13 February 1930) reiterating that the country was not ready for civil disobedience, and resigned as President of the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee. But he refused to leave the Congress because he believed that it would amount to political suicide but also that to oppose the Congress would be a crime. Syed Mahmud spoke of the danger of civil disobedience erupting into communal riots. On 25 January 1930, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Shate Daoodi and Nawab Ismail Khan had urged Muslims not to participate on the independence demonstrations of the Congress. The Muslim Conference at Lahore announced that it could not participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement. But Jawaharlal, Motilal and Gandhiji thought that the die had been cast and they could not now turn back. On 15 February 1930, at Ahmedabad, the Working Committee decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement and after four days, adopted the civil disobedience programme. On 20 February Gandhiji said: 'The resolution of the Working Committee gives me my Charter of Freedom — it also binds me in the lightest of chains.'

Jawaharlal, Motilal and Gandhiji have been blamed for ignoring Jinnah and the Muslim League, and their failure to put communal, mainly Hindu-Muslim, unity before civil disobedience. But did any one of them believe in the Hinduization of Indian national politics? All of them deplored the Hindu-Muslim madness standing in the way of the struggle for freedom. Jawaharlal's prescription in the 1929 Lahore session for curing the communal disease was an 'economic revolution'⁹² which would remove irrational beliefs and emotions, distrust and suspicion. He argued rather naively that real communal differences had largely disappeared. As for Motilal, his 'good humoured agnosticism set him above the storms of religious passion'.⁹³ He had no fascination for the Hindu Mahasabha which had been conceived as a counterblast to the All India Muslim League. Motilal had written to Jawaharlal on 6 January 1911: 'They in the Hindu-Muslim Conference called each other brothers, cousins'. A Committee of eight Hindus and eight Mohammedans, with Gokhale as the 17th Member, was nominated by the Aga Khan. It is certain that this Committee will never meet or come to any conclusions whatsoever.' In 1916, Motilal's Jehangirabad amendment to the Municipal Bill was alleged to be a surrender to the Muslims and he was violently criticized by the Hindu leaders and press. From 1925, Madan Mohan Malaviya made very effective use of Hindu communalism against Motilal who had to counter the propaganda that he was 'pro-Muslim and a beef-eater'. It has to be noted also that Motilal had presided over the Unity Conference on 26 September 1924. Gandhiji

admired Motilal's consummate patience and tact in unravelling the communal tangle while preparing the so-called Nehru Report. He wrote to Motilal in November 1928: 'I see you are having no end of difficulties with Musalmaan friends regarding your report.' If the Nehru Report made a number of concessions to the Hindu Mahasabha, as Sumit Sarkar⁹⁴ holds, it also stipulated a declaration of fundamental rights, assured all citizens the fullest liberty of conscience, belief and culture, and conceded the Muslim demand for constituting the North-West Province and Sind into separate provinces on the basis of cultural autonomy.

Dr Ansari's letter to Gandhiji of 28 June 1928 describes Motilal's formidable problems. It was Motilal who had arranged Gandhi's discussions with Jinnah at Delhi in February 1929 on Muslims complaints about the Nehru Report. At the Calcutta Congress, Motilal had drawn the attention of the delegates on this issue:

Whatever the highest conception of religion may be, it has in our day-to-day life come to signify bigotry and fanaticism, intolerance and narrow-mindedness. Not content with its reactionary influence on social matters it has invaded the domain of politics and economics. Its association with politics has been to the good of neither. Religion has been degraded and politics has sunk into the mire. Complete divorce of the one from the other is the only remedy.

That Motilal was conscious of the importance of the Hindu-Muslim unity in the freedom struggle becomes evident from his comments in December 1928: 'It is difficult to stand against the foreigner without offering him a united front. It is not easy to offer him a united front while the foreigner is in our midst — domineering over us.' Commenting on Jinnah's demands, Motilal wrote to V.J. Patel on 9 December 1929:

Do you expect Jinnah, Sapru, Gandhi, myself and yourself to be of one mind when we meet the Viceroy. . . With the Wilsonian attitude of Mr Jinnah who insists on the fourteen points of the Delhi Conference, with his want of faith even in Dominion Status and willingness to accept anything that comes his way . . . do you expect Gandhiji and myself who are willing to concede Dominion Status for the sake of the peace of the country to be of the same mind with Mr Jinnah.

According to Ravinder Kumar, the religious idiom of Gandhiji's politics evidenced the gulf between the two major communities of the subcontinent and was probably one of the reasons behind its division.⁹⁵ R.J. Moore too is of the opinion that the Hinduization of Indian national politics was apparent in 1929.⁹⁶ Coatman, the editor of *India* (the official

annual publication of the Government of India) maintained that the Congress Party was in fact, almost entirely a Hindu party; pre-eminently the party of privilege and vested interest.⁹⁷ Irwin, in the Massey Lecture delivered at the Toronto University in 1932, categorically stated that Gandhiji represented 'Hindu India alone'.⁹⁸

It is true that Gandhiji's 'idiom of politics' did create much misunderstanding amongst his contemporaries. Judith Brown tells us that he tried to soothe Muslim suspicions with assurances that his concept of swarajya or Ram Rajya did not mean Hindu Ram Rajya.⁹⁹ Hindu Mahasabha leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jayakar, N.C. Kelkar, M.S. Aney and B.S. Moonje, who remained within or on the fringes of the Congress and often disagreed with Gandhiji's politics, kept close relations with him as they could not ignore the Mahatma's appeal to deep forces in Hinduism as a devout, earnest and religious-minded Hindu. But Gandhiji never wanted the 'Hinduization of Indian national politics', though he could not totally or clearly disassociate himself from the Hindu Mahasabha leaders. Even the No-changers and advocates of Responsive Cooperation had similar involvements, despite their critical secularism. The personalities of many contemporaries of Gandhiji, both Hindu and Muslim leaders, unfold such contradictions, and this was reflected in the profoundly ambiguous and contradictory patterns of Indian politics and anti-imperialist movements in modern India. For example, Madan Mohan Malaviya, the apostle of 'Hind-Hindi-Hindu', was never hostile to Urdu and told a Muslim student of Banaras Hindu University, 'My kitchen is always open to you.'¹⁰⁰ Lala Lajpat Rai, who gave up the Swaraj Party and disapproved of Gandhian nationalism, identified himself with the Hindu Mahasabha and promoted its militant programme, honestly and sincerely believed in the necessity and desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁰¹ His letter to C.R. Das shortly before the Gaya Congress of 1925 makes it abundantly clear that the partition of India was his 'brain-child'.¹⁰² As early as 1925 Lajpat Rai suggested the partition of India with four Muslim States: (1) the Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier, (2) Western Punjab, (3) Sind, (4) Eastern Bengal.¹⁰³ M.A. Jinnah, who wanted to be a Muslim Gokhale,¹⁰⁴ was the acting honorary secretary of Dadabhai Naoroji in 1906. He denounced the principle of separate representation in the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909, admired Tilak and stood for secularism. Gokhale called Jinnah the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. Jinnah, the chief architect of the Lucknow Pact, opposed Gandhiji's resolution on non-cooperation, but co-operated with Madan Mohan Malaviya in December 1921 and January 1922 to arrange a Round Table Conference between the then viceroy, Lord Reading, and Gandhiji.¹⁰⁵ Another notable example of such contradictions is the 'leftist', Subhas Chandra Bose, who took up a

pro-zamindar stand and supported Hindu landlords of the district of Mymensingh against Muslim jotedars in the discussion on the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill, between 1923 and 1928.¹⁰⁶ The history of the national movement in India has thus been full of contradictions and paradoxes. It needs to be emphasized in the context of the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that both Hindu and Muslim communalist intransigence significantly weakened the nationalist cause at a critical moment like the struggle for purna swaraj.

According to S. Gopal, Gandhiji envisaged no 'severe campaign' in the Second Civil Disobedience Movement because he knew that the Indian National Congress had lost the support of all sections of Muslim opinion outside its own ranks.¹⁰⁷ Hindu-Muslim unity was nevertheless one of Gandhiji's constant concerns. In *Young India* of 29 May 1924, Gandhiji observed, 'there is no question more important and pressing than this. In my opinion, it blocks all progress. . . I agree with Mr Jinnah that Hindu-Muslim unity means swaraj. I see no way of achieving anything in this afflicted country without . . . unity between the Hindus and Musalmans of India'.¹⁰⁸ So Gandhiji's prescription for the malady of communalism was moral transformation.¹⁰⁹

In 1924, when a wave of communal riots swept over India, Gandhiji denounced the barbaric folly of killing Muslims for the sake of the life of a cow and imposed on himself a twenty-one day fast at Mohamed Ali's residence in Delhi. As president of the Belgaum Congress, Gandhiji reaffirmed his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity and urged the Hindus to set an example of self-sacrifice. In 1925, Gandhiji presided over the All-Parties Conference at Delhi and proposed the appointment of a sub-committee to suggest the terms of agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims. Unfortunately, there could be no agreement on any important point at issue. In 1926, there were 35 Hindu-Muslim riots in India and Gandhiji compared this fighting with the War of the Roses. After the murder of Swami Shraddhanandji, Gandhiji remarked at Wardha: 'It is unnecessary to discriminate and apportion the blame between the rival parties. Where both are to blame, who can arbitrate with golden scales and fix the exact ratio of blame?' By January 1927 Gandhiji admitted: 'I dare not touch the problem of Hindu-Muslim Unity. It has passed out of human hands and has been transferred to God's hands alone.' Even then, Gandhiji made a fervent appeal for Hindu-Muslim unity before the All-Parties Conference at Lucknow in 1928. Before the Lahore Congress of 1929, Gandhiji knew there was no chance of a Congress-Muslim alliance.

Jinnah is reported to have told a friend after the All-Parties Conference of December 1928: 'This is the parting of the ways.' It is true that

from Jinnah's point of view, the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity overshadowed all other problems. He described the Simon Commission as 'the butchering of our soul'¹¹⁰ and in March 1927 persuaded a number of Muslim leaders to come out with a compromise formula. The All-India Congress Committee in May 1927 and the Madras Congress accepted the Jinnah offer. In the Calcutta Session of the All-Parties Conference of 1928, Jinnah suggested amendments to the Nehru Report and made a passionate appeal for unity: 'Believe me there is no progress for India until the Musalmans and Hindus are united.'¹¹¹ But the Mahasabha leaders like Jayakar urged that there should be no communal solution outside the term of the Nehru Report. Motilal pleaded for the acceptance of the Nehru Report and said that it was like a structure, likely to crumble if one brick was pulled out. This had no impact on Jinnah, the Ali Brothers and the Aga Khan. Gandhiji took no formal part in the Calcutta Conference as he had no interest in constitution-making endeavours for communal agreement. Jinnah accused Congress leaders of going back on their 1927 promises, joined the Shafi group and put forward his famous Fourteen Points.

Commenting on 'the parting of the ways', S. Gopal says: 'Certainly thereafter he never looked back. Step by step, however thwarting to his own gifted personality, he moved forward on the road which was finally to end in the division of India and the creation of a separate Islamic state.'¹¹² But Jinnah did speak of Hindu-Muslim unity even after the Calcutta Session of the All-Parties Conference of 1928. He had a private conference with Gandhiji regarding the communal question on 9 August 1929 and urged the need for a united front in the anti-imperialist struggle again on 13 May 1933. On 1 January 1937, Jinnah made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim unity at Nagpur.¹¹³

The question in this context also arises whether the acceptance of Jinnah's demands would have stopped the crescendo of communal claims of many Muslim leaders, and satisfied the Muslim community. From 1906, each communal settlement, from the Muslim point of view, became the starting point for a harder bargain. Another question arises regarding the representative capacity of the Muslim League. According to Khalid Bin Sayeed, the membership of the Muslim League was small in the 1920s — many members were in arrears in payment of the annual fee of Rs 5. In 1927, there were only 1,330 members.¹¹⁴ Tara Chand asserts that the attitude of Jayakar, Malaviya and other Mahasabha leaders gave Jinnah a rude shock at the Calcutta Conference in 1928 and that Gandhiji, Motilal and other Congress leaders, instead of defending Jinnah, supported the 'Mahasabha point of view'.¹¹⁵ Motilal, however, was not happy with the 'Wilsonian attitude' of Jinnah. Gandhiji considered Jinnah to be an elite politician more interested in the constitution-

making process than the issue of complete independence. As early as 1926 Gandhiji had confessed that his method was not the method of an elite politician working from top downward.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, very few Indian leaders understood the deeper socio-economic roots of the communal problem. In 1925, an ardent youth asked Gandhiji: 'Do you think, sir, Hindu-Muslim unity is possible when Maulana Mohamed Ali says that an adulterous Musalman is superior to Mahatma Gandhi?'¹¹⁷

Jawaharlal, Motilal and Gandhiji were well aware of the fact that the British Government made political capital out of the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. Reading tried to conciliate the Muslims and to induce them to desert the Congress. His successor, Irwin, in his speeches at the Chelmsford Club on 17 July 1926 and in the legislature, advised the Hindu and Muslim leaders to patch up their quarrels. In September 1927 he wrote to Birkenhead that the Muslims were after all 'our best friends'. The greatest asset of Fazl-i-Husain was the friendly attitude of the British Government. Birkenhead, Peel and Hoare were even more pro-Muslim than Irwin and they were never enamoured of 'Congress chatterers'. Irwin, the blue-blooded Tory, revealed his innermost thoughts to the secretary of state on this problem. On 13 May 1930 (when the Salt Satyagraha had already been launched), Irwin wrote that, in its fight against the Congress, the government depended much on the loyalty and support of the Muslim community. On 24 May 1930, Irwin observed, 'It is worth remembering that at the moment Gandhi is our enemy and the Muslims our friends.'¹¹⁸

The Civil Disobedience Movement was launched as a mass protest against the constitutional discussions going on in London and the government's refusal to consider anything more than dominion status for India.¹¹⁹ For the Congress, dominion status meant complete independence plus voluntary partnership with Britain.¹²⁰ The Congress threw down the gauntlet in 1929 because Jawaharlal, Motilal, Gandhiji and their supporters understood the diplomatic language of the British Government which meant one thing to India and quite another to England. In *Young India*, Gandhiji pointed out that purna swaraj would never come unless the people of India generated the power within them to enforce their will. He made it abundantly clear that: 'The British people must realise that the Empire is to come to an end.'¹²¹

Judith Brown describes Gandhiji's re-emergence as a central figure in the Congress of 1928¹²² as the 'recreation of a political leader'.¹²³ After the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement, Gandhiji felt 'defeated and humbled' and he expressed his desire to retire from the Congress.¹²⁴ During the period 1922-8, which Moon calls 'partial eclipse',¹²⁵ Gandhiji was a peripheral figure¹²⁶ in the Congress. He concentrated on the three things — communal unity, khadi and the removal of untouchability.¹²⁷

Reading and Irwin judged Gandhiji to be a spent force politically. In 1927 Irwin thought that Gandhiji was rather remote and reluctant to re-enter the arena of politics. But Gandhiji did not count himself as politically retired. In 1924, Gandhiji was the Congress president at Belgaum. The main flank of the Congress policy remained his Constructive Programme. Little of importance in the Congress Party was done without his knowledge. He was fully informed of the Congress proceedings. In 1926, Sir Henry Lawrence, the acting Governor of Bombay invited Gandhiji to see him in order to avert a possible boycott of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. Judith Brown tells us that the Civil Disobedience Movement brought Gandhiji to the attention of a world-wide audience. In the 1920s Romain Rolland was the mouthpiece of Gandhian ideas in Europe. In 1923 he wrote a biography of Gandhiji. 'Gandhian weapons' were used by the Germans in the Ruhr. The *American Nation* commented in 1922: 'What Germany needs is a German Gandhi.' During the Non-cooperation Movement, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Times*, the *Nation* and the *New Republic* made significant references to Gandhiji and his activities. In 1921, Alexander W. Weddell, American Consul General India, recognized that Gandhiji was the authentic voice of India. Even the Burmese were anxious to learn from Gandhiji the technique of Satyagraha.¹²⁸

Subhas Chandra described Gandhiji's 'period of waiting and preparation' (1922-9) as a temporary retirement or a strategic retreat 'to recapture the Congress machinery once again'.¹²⁹ These years, as Judith Brown says, were for him a time of stocktaking and rethinking his personal priorities and his role in public affairs.¹³⁰ During this period, he tried to work from the bottom upward, to reinforce the fragile unity of the Congress, refurbish it as an organization, and devoted himself to constructing the social foundations of swaraj. Gandhiji said, 'The awakening of the masses is a necessary part of the training. I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again.' He wrote to Mohamed Ali about his national Programme — Hindu-Muslim unity, the charkha, the removal of untouchability and the application of non-violence in thought, word and deed. Gandhiji maintained that 'If we faithfully and fully carry out this programme we need never resort to civil disobedience, and I should hope that it will never be necessary.' His Sabarmati Ashram was designed as a laboratory for this experiment. In 1924 Gandhiji resumed editorial charge of *Young India* and *Navajivan* and filled them with his articles on his mission of 'manufacture of souls'. As the founder of the All India Spinners Association, Gandhiji attached supreme importance to the khadi programme and recommended intensive khadi propaganda. At every place he repeated Tilak's slogan: 'Swaraj is my birthright and you cannot have it without khaddar.' He reiter-

ated the value of the khadi programme from the point of view of mass contact, political education, integration of all sections of society and making khaddar the centre of all village industries. Gandhiji evolved a scheme whereby Congress organizations were to enrol volunteers, to sell khadi from door to door and do peaceful picketing of shops selling foreign cloth. The message of the charkha was carried to the remote villages — in Noakhali retired prostitutes were supporting themselves by spinning. When Motilal Nehru hawked khaddar in the streets of Allahabad, *The Times of India* remarked that he was making an ass of himself. Gandhiji's excessive emphasis on the charkha was criticized by Rabindranath Tagore. Richard B. Gregg¹³¹ has shown that Gandhiji's khaddar movement was not a fantastic aberration of an Indian dreamer.

During the period of preparation for the struggle for purna swaraj, Gandhiji undertook an extensive tour of India, Burma and Ceylon, addressed public meetings, addressed students, collected funds for *daridra-narayan* and thus built up support, particularly rural support, for the Congress. 'In many places Gandhi walked through bush, briar, mud and water. He tramped, toured in boats and waded through streams to see things with his own eyes.'¹³² He discovered that the real India lived in the villages, and perceived the blank stare in the eyes of the villagers. As Gandhiji said, 'Understand that slavery of India is coarser than the coarsest khaddar, understand that pauperism of India is infinitely coarser than the coarsest Chittagong Khaddar.'

Gandhiji underlined the need of a sound financial basis for the Congress and requested Jawaharlal to put the Congress Committees in order. Judith Brown rightly observes that Gandhiji was a superb fundraiser, and thanks to him, the AICC finances were now in 'a far healthier condition than ever before'.¹³³ In public meetings Gandhiji stressed the role of youth and women, and called himself a man mad after freedom. According to S. Gopal, when Gandhiji launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, he knew that the long years of preparation had not been wasted.¹³⁴ The detailed research of Hitesh Sanyal, Gyan Pandey and David Hardiman have shown that the centres of Gandhian constructive work provided the initial bases for the movement. The struggle for purna swaraj began in Gujarat where Gandhian constructive work had attained the greatest success.

Once, Sir George Lloyd, who had been Governor of Bombay, said that Gandhiji under his plea of non-violence was at heart a violent revolutionary who would one day come out of his true colours. It is significant that in 1924 Gandhiji expressed his belief in the efficacy and righteousness of civil disobedience in a letter to Mohamed Ali. In 1925, Gandhiji told Chapman, the librarian of the Imperial Library, that he would

oppose the British Raj because it was the instrument of India's degradation. In the Congress session at Kanpur in 1925, Gandhiji emphatically said: 'Today I would commence civil disobedience, if I thought that the fire and fervour are there in the people. But alas! they are not.' On 1 May 1928, Gandhiji wrote to Dr B.C. Roy: 'I am biding my time and you will find me leading the country in the field of politics when the country is ready. I have no false modesty about me. I am undoubtedly a politician in my own way, and I have a scheme for the country's freedom.'¹³⁵ But even on 31 January 1929, Gandhiji's Inner Voice said, 'I need greater preparation.'

4. 'The Climactic Years' (1922-9)¹³⁶

Many forces coalesced towards a new great wave of anti-imperialist struggle in 1930. Their roots are to be sought in the changing political climate of the world, particularly of India, the world-wide depression, social tensions and the deepening economic crisis.

The political climate of the world was changing rapidly during the period 1922-9, and it is impossible that the elite politicians, and even 'a bourgeois mascot' like Gandhiji (as M.N. Roy described him in *Vanguard*, May-June 1922) did not sense the mounting tempo of events. In 1921, a treaty with Southern Ireland accepted dominion status for the Irish Free State. In 1922, Egypt became independent, subject to certain reservations. Through a Fascist revolution, Mussolini became dictator of Italy. In 1923, Turkey became a republic with Mustafa Kamal as the first president. In 1923, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed and her first five-year plan started in 1928. In 1924, Greece was proclaimed a republic. In England, the first Labour (minority) Government was formed in 1924, there was a general strike in 1926, universal suffrage for men and women at 21 was proclaimed in 1928, and the Balfour Declaration of 1926 dealt with the vital question of equal status of the dominions and the 'Mother Country'. In Europe, the muffled booming of class war, labour unrest and unemployment, led to the advocacy of a variety of nostrums like socialism, communism and fascism.¹³⁷ The Indian political climate vibrated in sympathy with these developments.

The Balfour Declaration of 1926 had a definite impact on rethinking among Indian leaders. Subhas Chandra hailed the youth movements of Germany, Russia, Italy and China. Jawaharlal was interested in the Sinn Fein in Ireland. He praised the US-Italian labour martyrs, Sacco and Vanzetti. Jawaharlal's active participation in the Brussels Congress in February 1927 gave him a vision of world anti-imperialist movements. He met representatives of a number of countries in the Far and Middle East, North Africa, Central and South America, Italy, France and Britain there. He was impressed by the liberation movements in Egypt and

Persia, struggling for their economic freedom from the colonial oppression.¹³⁸ Russia made a great impact on Jawaharlal, who wrote for the *Hindu* covering his visit to 'the country of hammer and sickle' in 1927. In December 1928, Jawaharlal, in his presidential address in the Socialist Youth Congress, called for independence as a necessary preliminary to a communistic society.

With the political temperature fast rising, both Jawaharlal and Gandhiji conceived political liberty as a prelude to social justice. Gandhiji's socialism was, however, natural to him and not adapted from any book. Manoranjan Jha is of the opinion that the text of the Declaration for Purna Swaraj had striking resemblance to the Declaration of Independence passed by the Congress of the Thirteen Colonies of America on 4 July 1776.¹³⁹ It has to be noted that the letter of challenge in the Civil Disobedience Movement (breaking the salt law) was delivered to Irwin by a Young British Quaker, Reginald Reynolds. According to A.L. Basham, British suffragettes and the writings of Thoreau were western factors which stimulated Gandhiji to work out the policy of satyagraha.¹⁴⁰

Socialist and communist ideas aroused considerable interest in India. 'Dange from being a *chela* of Tilak became a *chela* of Lenin.' The first socialist weekly, *The Socialist*, was started in Bombay by Dange in 1923. In 1927, Dange attacked C.F. Andrews for his moderate Trade Union leadership and described him as 'the Hume of the Trade union movement'. In the 1920s the Government of India was obsessed with the 'Bolshevik menace'.

In 1920, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided to take concrete measures for the spread of communism in the East. In 1924, Chicherin declared that 'future India must stand at the head of the free Eastern Republics'. M.N. Roy, who was adviser to the Communist Party in Moscow on Indian affairs and a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, played an important part in establishing communist cells in India. Some Indian communists were trained in Russia. The Peshawar Conspiracy Cases (1922-7), the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case (1924) and the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929) were a new phenomenon in India. That the communist propaganda made considerable headway became evident from Bhagat Singh's transition to Marxism and talk of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is indeed significant that even Gandhiji praised 'Comrade Saklatvala' (the Indian who had become a Communist member of the British Parliament) for his transparent sincerity, and criticized the arbitrary action of the British Government in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. It was, however, Jawaharlal who organized a Meerut Prisoners' 'Defence Committee, with Motilal as its chairman. He raised funds for the defence of the accused (mostly

prominent Communists like M.N. Roy, Dange, S. Usmani, K.N. Jogelkar, M. Ahmad etc.) and termed the case as a blow against the whole working class in India. Rabindranath Tagore's letters from Russia in October 1930 recognized that Russia had worked miracles in a short time. All these developments clearly indicate how closely India was wired to the main currents of the changing world outside.

With the new mood of India (the post-1922 mood of disillusionment) the world audience was in harmony. In England the Labour Party came into office in January 1924. Labour Leaders like Lansbury, Fenner Brockway, and Wedgwood supported the Indian demand for responsible self-government. Ramsay MacDonald twice visited India and appeared to be sympathetic to Indian aspirations. He coined the phrase 'risks of peace'. Presiding over a meeting held at Queen's Hall in London, Ramsay MacDonald said: 'We will say to the Indians, your country is yours, your Government is yours.' It was during these years that Fenner Brockway, Philip Spratt, Ben Bradley and Lester Hutchinson assisted the growth of the rising working class movement in India. In 1928, a delegation was sent to India by the British Trade Union Congress. Soviet Russia evinced interest in the Indian nationalist movement, particularly the trade union movement. Lenin urged the necessity of giving broad support to the mass upsurges in the colonies and semi-colonies which, in his opinion, were predominantly bourgeois-led national movements.

America also showed keen interest in the Indian freedom struggle. Prompted by the realization of the importance of American opinion, the British Government sent Rushbrook Williams, Lord Meston, Edward Thompson and Sir John Simon to America to interpret the British policy in India. Rushbrook Williams recalled American interest in Gandhiji 'due to the picturesque nature of his activities and his personal idealism'. In 1929 Rushbrook Williams was subjected in the United States to the same kind of questioning about British policy with regard to India as, in 1920, he had been in regard to Ireland. Senator John B. Blaine of Wisconsin submitted a resolution in the Senate on the issue of Indian independence on 6 January 1930. *The Nation* criticized the British press for belittling the gravity of the situation in India. William I. Hull, Professor of International Relations in Swarthmore College, predicted that, if before 1 January 1930 dominion status was not available to India, a civil war under the banner of complete independence would probably break out. The Indian National Congress recognized the American Branch of the Indian National Congress operating in New York under the direction of Sailendranath Ghosh. Jawaharlal and Gandhiji were in correspondence with several persons in America like Roger Baldwin and T.H.K. Rezmie (the founder of the Indian Independence League of America). Sher M. Qureshi, on behalf of the Independence of India

League, detailed the British exploitation of India. Nur M. Malik, President of Indian Independence Central Committee in Detroit, made it clear in his manifesto that they wanted America to understand India. The *New York Times* published several cables from Lahore reporting on the day-to-day deliberations of the Congress in 1929 (from 26 December 1929 to 1 January 1930). Sailendranath Ghosh organized an 'Independence' dinner in New York on 26 January 1930.

The political climate in India during the years 1922-9 was indicative of the signs of the coming stormy weather in the 1930s. Lord Reading had prophesied that his successor (Lord Irwin) would have an easy interlude of eighteen months, which would be only the lull before the storm. There were clearly discernible trends — Congress leadership, communal pressures, the radical upsurge, the spread of socialist and communist ideas, the trade union movement, orthodox terrorist activities and the growth of the peasant movement.

Thus we find that different strands had entered into the mass movements in India. Sumit Sarkar maintains that Gandhiji, who resisted the purna swaraj demand throughout 1926-8, intervened in movements in 1930 which had already started.¹⁴¹ Evidently, there were parallel streams of political thinking and no clear polarization. But the broad masses of India sympathized with the Congress demand for complete independence in 1929. Irwin and Wedgewood Benn were convinced in 1930s that India had moved far since the time of the Montford Reforms. Ideas of self-government had spread far and wide. The third Afghan War (with Amir Amanullah's anti-British stance and leaning towards Russia), the revolution in Turkey, the growth of freedom in the British dominions, the establishment of a national government in China, all combined to create a new mood in India and stimulated the desire to end colonial rule. On 3 July 1930, Irwin wrote to Wedgewood Benn: 'Great Britain will make an irrevocable mistake if she attempts to ignore the subjective and psychological side of the whole problem.' Yet Lloyd George, Montagu, Peel, Oliver, Reading, Baldwin, Austin Chamberlain, Birkenhead, Balfour and Winston Churchill believed that the Act of 1919 had given away too much and the claims of the Indian politicians were extravagant. They forgot that old Indian fear of the mighty British Empire had begun to dissipate with the smashing victories of the Germans in the 1914-19 war.

Lloyd George's 'steel-frame' speech in August 1922 created frustration among Indian politicians who had been urging the paramount need of transference of power into Indian hands. Reading became aware of the dominant influence of the Congress in the elections of 1923. The Swarajists gave ample proof that the Act of 1919 was unworkable. Dyarchy became a term of abuse. In March 1926, Motilal Nehru declared: 'We

have no further use for these sham institutions [the legislative assembly]', and he was waiting for a suitable opportunity to lead the Swarajists out of the assembly as it was not meant 'for decent people.'

The appointment of an all-white statutory commission, the Simon Commission, appeared to Gandhiji an organized insult to a whole people. He urged people to protest with massive demonstrations and countrywide hartal.¹⁴² According to S. Gopal, not since the Ilbert Bill had racial feelings been stirred so deeply.¹⁴³ Lajpat Rai declared that he had no faith in the bona fides of the commission. Madan Mohan Malaviya said that the national honour was at stake. Due to the efforts of Motilal, Lajpat Rai and Jinnah, the Imperial Legislative Assembly registered its disapproval of the statutory commission on 16 February 1928 amid cries of *Bande Mataram*. Those who welcomed it were the 'splinter groups' (like the section of the Muslim League led by Muhammad Shafi), the 'Depressed Classes' led by Ambedkar, 'the non-Brahmins of Madras, Europeans and Anglo-Indians'.¹⁴⁴

There were countrywide hartals and spontaneous massive demonstrations, particularly at Calcutta, Lahore and Lucknow. On 30 October 1928 the police assaulted Lala Lajpat Rai while he was leading a procession near Lahore railway station and he passed away on 17 November 1928. In the demonstrations at Lucknow (28-30 November 1928), the students welcomed Sir John Simon with black flags, Khaliquzzaman floated kites and balloons with 'Go Back Simon' slogans at Kaiserbagh and Jawaharlal and Govind Ballabh Pant were beaten by the police. The whole atmosphere was charged with excitement. The widespread stimulus of the Gandhian non-cooperation movement had awakened a new consciousness among the masses. The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 led by Vallabhbhai Patel was a spectacular success and it was an important contributory factor to the resurgence of Gandhian nationalism.

In the twenties, revolutionary terrorism and youth movements were active in India. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's *Pather Dabi* (1926) and Sachin Sanyal's *Bandi Jivan* had a major influence on the process of rethinking among the urban youth of Bengal. *Atmashakti*, *Sarathi* and *Bijoli* (Bengali revolutionary journals) urged the youth to make sacrifices like the old revolutionaries. The revolutionary parties got involved in Congress factional politics in Bengal. Yugantar Party leaders backed Subhas Chandra Bose and Anushilan Samiti leaders supported Deshpriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta. The Mechhuabazar group of revolutionaries highlighted colonial oppression. In the revival of revolutionary terrorism, Surya Sen, Hemchandra Kanungo and Bhupendranath Dutta represented some of the dominant sections of revolutionary leadership in Bengal. Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee organized a network of revolutionary centres in UP. A conference of the revolu-

tionaries was held at Kanpur in October 1924. After the Kakori case of 9 August 1925, the Hindustan Republican Association was organized. The revolutionaries, Ramprasad Bismil, Roshan Lal and Ashfaqullah were hanged for their involvement in the Kakori conspiracy. Bismil's last words were, 'I wish the downfall of the British Empire'. Roshan Lal went up the gallows with Bande Mataram on his lips and a copy of the Gita in his hand. Ashfaqullah had a copy of the Quran tied round his neck when he stepped to the gallows.

The revolutionary activities and terrorist outrages provided a widespread stimulus for the demand for complete independence, in contrast to communal pressures (both Hindu and Muslim) propagating ideas of separation and isolation and spreading the poison of hatred and fear. Bhagat Singh and Ajay Ghosh, who played a vital role in organizing the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army in 1928, became committed to Marxism. Revolutionary leaders Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutta, Abani Mukherji, and Barkatullah also turned towards Marxism. What was significant, however, was that many Congress leaders had close links with the revolutionary leaders. Chandrashekhar Azad received valuable assistance from Motilal Nehru when in dire distress. Jawaharlal visited the young revolutionary Jatindranath Das in prison in 1929 and found him 'soft and gentle like a young girl'. Jatindranath Das, who died after fasting for sixty-one days, was hailed as India's MacSwiney. During this period, Communist leaders like S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, Singaravelu and Ghulam Husain tried to work within the national mainstream of the Congress movement. The *Socialist* of Dange (the first Communist journal in India) proposed that there should be a 'Socialist Labour Party' within the Congress. In May 1923 Singaravelu announced the formation of a Labour Kisan Party and emphasized the need to combine 'national strikes' with non-cooperation. Naren Bhattacharji (alias Manabendra Nath Roy), the Yugantar revolutionary, helped Mikhail Borodin to found a Communist Party in Mexico in 1919 and next year attended the Second Congress of the Communist International.

M.N. Roy became famous for his controversy with Lenin. Roy considered Gandhiji a 'bourgeois-nationalist' leader and thought that the mass upsurges were moving towards revolution independently of the 'bourgeois-nationalist' Congress movement. In 1922, M.N. Roy started from Berlin the fortnightly *Vanguard of Indian Independence*. In collaboration with Abani Mukherji, he published his *India in Transition*. Roy was critical of Congress leadership in the Non-cooperation Movement, but he referred to Gandhiji's deep love for his suffering countrymen. According to G. Adhikari, M.N. Roy regularly prepared Communist programmatic statements for circulation among delegates of the annual

sessions of the Congress. He also had contacts with the Nehrus, and once Motilal came to his rescue in the Imperial Legislative Assembly. Sumit Sarkar asserts that Indian Communism really sprang from roots within the national movement.¹⁴⁵

The mass upsurges in the 1930s had their roots in decisive economic changes in India during the previous decade. Economic stagnation and mass poverty remained the dominant features of colonial India in the early 1920s. Due to the world capitalist crises the world economy faltered towards depression in the late 1920s. Pressure on the marketing and credit network in India became increasingly severe. In this world-wide depression India was particularly handicapped: its destructive impact on Indian domestic economy was devastating. The British Government adopted policies which were not in accordance with the interest of India. In the interest of Britain, the rupee was linked to Sterling even when the British currency was delinked from gold.¹⁴⁶ The rupee remained tied to Sterling at the rate of 1s 6d which was high. This exchange ratio was fixed by the Hilton-Young Commission of 1926. The legislature had no control over the Reserve Bank, and owing to the currency policy the price level remained depressed. The exchange ratio was a major cause of bourgeois grievance in India. It meant a bonus for British businessmen and officials repatriating profits or pensions from India. The tariff policy of the British Government was governed largely by the wishes and interests of British manufacturers.

Much of the economic distress in India, which gave a new momentum to the national liberation movement, was brought about by the world depression. The severe decline in international market prices of agricultural commodities had an adverse effect on agricultural income in India. Agricultural prices had started declining from 1926. The agrarian crisis was affecting peasants' share in profits from the sale of agricultural produce like wheat, jute, raw-cotton and rice. Wheat prices dropped by 50 per cent and those of jute by 50 to 65 per cent. Thus the real income of the peasants dropped considerably. The depression also led to enhanced rent and interest payments. With the increasing revenue demands, the peasants failed to recover their costs of cultivation. Landlords began substituting rent in cash for rent in kind and so the tillers of soil were unable to pay dues to landlords and the state. More and more land owned by peasants went into the hands of the landlords, prosperous peasants and moneylenders. Agricultural indebtedness reached nine thousand million rupees. Thus the owners of small holdings and tenant-farmers found themselves bankrupt. The middle peasants and the lower middle class were the worst affected. In 1931 Gandhiji in *Young India* produced tables showing the index number of prices in India since 1850. He showed a fifty per cent drop in prices of staples from

1915. Gandhiji discussed the crisis with the viceroy and suggested drastic remission of revenue payments.¹⁴⁷ Jawaharlal had genuine sympathy for the peasants. According to Sri Prakasa and P.N. Banerjee, the British Government failed to take steps to relieve the distress of the peasants during the depression. On the contrary, the government raised taxes for maintaining the bureaucracy and the large army. It needs to be emphasized that in the struggle for purna swaraj the Congress depended not only on the wealthy capitalist groups, mercantile classes and landlords, but also on the lower middle class, the middle peasants, peasant-proprietors, tenant small-holders and the urban youth.

According to Sivasubramanian, the problems of deep agrarian depression were sharpened by marked demographic change from the 1920s. Population had risen from 306 million in 1921 to 338 million in 1931, though there was no significant rise in per capita national income. The steep fall in agricultural prices created discontent among the peasants who wanted reduction of rent, debt-burdens, revenue assessments, return of their alienated land and even the abolition of zamindari. Except in UP, Gujarat, coastal Andhra, and the ryotwari areas, the Congress did not take up any conspicuous pro-peasant stance during this period. Many Congressmen had strong links with zamindar or tenureholders. Most of the Swarajists, too, were unresponsive to peasant demands for rent reduction and share-cropping (*barga*) efforts in Bengal, Bihar and UP and they were unsympathetic to *namasudra* and Muslim *bargadar* movements in Mymensingh, Dacca, Pabna, Khulna and Nadia. The Swarajists opposed the proposal to give tenancy to *bargadars*. As the genuine grievances of the peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers were neglected by many Congress leaders with capitalist connections or links with zamindari and tenure-holding, the number of peasant activists increased. No wonder, Baba Ramchandra, a peasant activist of UP, observed in November 1925 that the peasants in India were slaves and he referred to Lenin as 'the dear leader of the kisans'.¹⁴⁸ Gandhiji criticized the Communists too for their neglect of the peasantry. With agrarian discontent, agricultural productivity stagnated everywhere except in Madras and the Punjab. Amiya Bagchi has shown that average productivity per acre for all crops went down.¹⁴⁹

With the world-wide depression, Britain's ties with the capitalist world economy were considerably weakened and this brought about 'a qualitative shift in the overall pattern of British colonial exploitation of India'.¹⁵⁰ In the late 1920s India still took in about 28 per cent of Lancashire textiles and about 11 per cent of British exports. India's export surplus with other countries (other than the UK) of agricultural raw materials was vitally important for British capital investment in the mining, tea and jute industries which were 'extractive and export

oriented industries'. The Lancashire trade, however, could not be saved. Imports of cotton piecegoods from Britain fell from 1,248 million yards in 1929/30 to 376 million yards in 1931/32. Thus the depression brought a major change in British capitalist colonization in India.

Due to financial difficulties the Government of India tried to defend financial controls and imposed protective duties on cotton, paper and sugar. But these protective tariffs were linked to 'Imperial Preferences' for Britain. The 'drain of wealth' (India's invisible remittances to Britain like 'Home charges', dividends on private capital investments, insurance and bank remittances, freight charges, royalties) represented 16.31 per cent of Britain's total invisible earnings in 1923 and 14.77 per cent in 1931.¹⁵¹ Claude Markovitz¹⁵² has shown how the Home charges could be met only by a heavy export of gold through distress sales by Indians. The depression affected the value of Indian exports considerably. The total value of India's exports in 1925/26 had been valued at Rs 385 crores, in 1926/27 Rs 309 crores, in 1928/29 Rs 381 crores, in 1929/30 Rs 311 crores, and by the following year it had dropped to Rs 257 crores. The lowest level was reached in 1931/32, when the figure was Rs 181 crores. It is significant that the fall in the value of imports was equally drastic. The total declined by almost a half over the same years. K.N. Chaudhuri remarks:

It might at first sight seem strange that the world depression which began in 1927 did not make much difference to the actual size of the trade balance. This was due to the inclusion of treasure in the commodity transactions. From 1921-22 to 1930-31 India was a net importer of treasure on private account. But from 1931-32 she became a net exporter of gold, the total size of the outflow being often more than a quarter of the value of exports. Without the help of gold exports the commodity balance would actually have shown a deficit in the immediate post-depression years.¹⁵³

G.G. Kotovsky is of the opinion that the world economic crisis of 1929 dealt a severe blow to the economy of India. As the gulf between prices for Indian exports and imports, above all British ones, was growing considerably, the British bourgeoisie endeavoured to extricate itself from the depression at the expense of its colonies, and first and foremost that of India.¹⁵⁴ B.R. Tomlinson, however, holds that the British policy makers looked to other colonies, not India, for rescuing Britain from the economic troubles caused by the depression.¹⁵⁵

Capitalist growth in colonial India in the 1920s and the overall weight of bourgeois groups in Indian politics created a number of problems in India's struggle for purna swaraj. The depression affected small and medium-scale industrial and commercial enterprises; but the upper echelons of the Indian bourgeoisie, which had links with the Congress,

were able to retain their economic position with development of textile, sugar, cement, paper, jute and steel industries. The growing strength of Indian capitalism gave rise to clashes between the upper strata of the Indian entrepreneurs and the British Government. The major capitalist grievances were the 1s 6d exchange ratio, British financial control through the Imperial and Exchange banks and the government's rejection of the Cotton Tariff Board's proposals for raising import duties from 11 to 15 per cent in the face of Japanese and Lancashire competition. Calcutta Marwari business groups were in conflict with British jute interests. The Birla group tried to make headway against entrenched British jute companies. Walchand Hirachand and Lalji Naranji's Scindia Steam Navigation Company had to compete with British shipping interests headed by Lord Inchcape. The Indian Mercantile Marine Committee's recommendation's for reservation of coastal shipping to Indian companies and Haji's bill on the subject in March 1928 were turned down by the government. Birla was unhappy, as the Imperial Bank in some cases was not behaving properly, and Purushottamdas Thakurdas criticized the monopoly exercised by the exchange banks.

Birla and Thakurdas founded the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1927. From the Government's point of view 'the well-disposed capitalists' were the Tatas, Cowasji Jehangir, Ibrahim Rahimatullah and Homi Mody who were against picketing and were obsessed with the 'Red scare'. They tried to start a capitalist organization by openly aligning with the Europeans. But Birla and Thakurdas were not in favour of a purely capitalistic organization. They wanted to retain links with the Congress to fight against communism. It is to be borne in mind that Thakurdas had actively opposed Gandhiji when he had launched the Non-cooperation Movement. Birla's 'nationalist strategy', in collaboration with Thakurdas in 1929, also reveals another mounting 'business pressure' in the struggle for purna swaraj. Birla knew not only 'The Path to Prosperity', but he was also 'In the shadow of the Mahatma' (titles of books by Birla). Thakurdas in his letter to N.M. Majumdar (7 June 1929) wrote, '... we are Indians first and merchants and industrialists afterwards'. But he wanted to be 'on surer grounds' before supporting the nationalist movement. Bipan Chandra rightly points out that as the 'International economy' pressed back to reforge the links (India's colonial economic links with the world capitalist economy) and the gains of the Indian capitalist class were threatened, it hastened to support the nationalist movement which was, at the time, pledged to break these links.¹⁵⁶ Birla and Thakurdas were not worried much by Jawaharlal's 'socialism'. They believed that the best way to wage a successful struggle against the 'Left Wing' in the Congress was to fight through 'the Mahatma's men'. According to Bipan Chandra, the political acumen of

Birla, the mentor of the capitalist class in India, often bordered on that of a genius.¹⁵⁷

Capitalist growth in the twenties evidently meant growing burdens on the working class. It is true that working conditions were not satisfactory, sometimes they were atrocious. The wages of the working class lagged behind the price line. The 'rationalization' drives in 1928/29 were responsible for labour unrest in India. In that year there were 203 strikes and lock-outs in which 506,851 workers were involved. Mass dismissal of workers at a time of rising prices led to a deterioration in the position of the working class. The world economic crisis hit the towns. Factories and small-scale industrial enterprises were closed down, the labour dissatisfaction manifested itself in strikes in the Indian industries. Jawaharlal writes in his *Autobiography*: 'The Labour Movement was becoming class conscious, militant and dangerous both in ideology and in organisation.'¹⁵⁸ The Communists enjoyed the greatest influence among the working class and they tried to collaborate with the 'Left Wing of the Congress'. The labour unions and associations had 'Congress links' and the government was considerably alarmed by the possible 'Congress-labour link-up'. But it is true that, on the whole, the Congress involvement with labour was intermittent and marginal. The Congress did not seriously think of utilizing the potentialities of the labour movement in anti-imperialist struggle.¹⁵⁹ The trade union movement attracted Congress leaders. Coatman says that it was one of the most powerful forces working for inter-communal amity.¹⁶⁰ Lajpat Rai was the first president of the All India Trade Union Congress. Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel, Annie Besant, Jawaharlal, Subhas Chandra and even Jinnah attended All India Trade Union Congress sessions. C.F. Andrews was for some time the president of the Jamshedpur Labour Association. Jawaharlal presided over the 'rump session' of the All India Trade Union Congress at Nagpur in 1929. Gandhiji kept aloof from the labour upsurge and the labour movement. In a letter to Agatha Harrison, an English Quaker, Gandhiji wrote: 'Jawaharlal's way is not my way. I accept his ideal about land etc. But I do not accept practically any of his methods. I would strain every nerve to prevent a class war. My method is designed to avoid conflict. His is not so designed.'¹⁶¹ Ravinder Kumar aptly remarks that Gandhiji refused to accept classes as a meaningful concept.¹⁶² Gandhiji emphasized the need for harmony between capital and labour. In the Ahmedabad textile strike in 1923 Gandhiji urged workers not to embarrass their employers: 'Faithful servants serve their masters even without pay.' Curiously enough, Gandhiji on his way back to India, after attending the Second Round Table Conference, made a comment on the class struggle in Switzerland: 'Labour does not know its power. Did it know it, it would only have to rise to have capitalism crumble

away. For labour is the only power in the world.'¹⁶³ The labour upsurge in the 1920s was a symptom of 'pressures from below'. R.K. Das gives a detailed list of the strikes of late 1919 and early 1920.¹⁶⁴ During the second half of 1920 there were 110 strikes in Bengal. The number of strikes in India was 376 in 1921. Swami Darshan and Swami Viswanand led a powerful East India Railway strike from February to April 1922. In April 1923, 56 textile mills in Ahmedabad were closed in protest against a 20 per cent wage-cut. There were four strikes in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras between 1922 and 1923. In 1923, Singaravelu organized a rally on Madras beach for the first celebration of May Day in India. There were 134 strikes between 1924 and 1927. There were massive strikes in the textile mills of Bombay in 1924 (January-March), and 1925 (September-December), and on the North-Western Railway in 1925 (April-June). The year 1927 marked the beginning of a labour upsurge in India. The Kharagpur strikes of 1927 were followed by the Lillooah rail workshop strike (January-July 1928), Calcutta Corporation Scavenger's strike and strikes at jute mills in Chengail and Bauria in 1928, strike calls by the Jamshedpur Labour Association in 1928, a strike of the Bombay textile workers from April to October 1928, the Golmuri tin-plate strike in 1929, the first general strike in jute mills in 1929 (July-August), a general strike (April-August 1929) by the Girni Kamgar Union of Bombay led by Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive, and strike on the G.I.P. Railway in 1930 (February-March).

In the 1920s the labour movement was not on an independent political footing, though there were independent labour leaders like Prabhabati Dasgupta and numerous labour unions and associations had been formed. On the whole, labour leadership was dominated by the middle class, and the Communists. But the motives of many so-called and self-styled leaders were profoundly ambiguous. There were liberal humanitarians like N.M. Joshi and V.V. Giri, Tilakites, Congressmen with growing Communist sympathies like Radharaman Mitra and Bankim Mukherjee, Bengal Communists like Dharani Goswami and Gopen Chakravarty, independent labour leaders like Prabhabati Dasgupta, Kiran Mitra and Sibnath Banerjee, moderates and humanists like C.F. Andrews, followers of Annie Besant like Baptista, Nationalists and Khilafatists like Prabhatkumsum Roy Chowdhury, Byomkesh Chakravarty, S.N. Haldar, I.B. Sen, political sanyasis like Swami Darshanand and Swami Vishwanand, radicals like Jitendralal Banerjee, Hemantakumar Sarkar and Mrinalkanti Bose, Communist leaders including those who had emerged from out of the Non-cooperation Movement like S.A. Dange, Joglekar, Mirajkar, A.A. Alve, G.R. Kasle, Muzaffar Ahmad, Singaravelu, Ghulam Husain, Deshpande, B.T. Ranadive and left-wing leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The Jamshedpur Labour Association under C.F. Andrews was characterized by the dissatisfied workers as a 'Company Union'. Gandhiji showed some interest in labour unrest in Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad, and his ardent follower, Dr Rajendra Prasad, visited Golmuri in 1929. Bhulabhai Desai also tried to establish his influence over labour. The All India Congress Committee set up a Labour Research Department under Bakar Ali Mirza in 1929 to counteract the Communist complexion of the labour movement. The well-established Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, which had 27,000 members was a 'Gandhian Association'. The Communist-led Girni Kamgar Union had about 60,000 members in 1929. The Communists and the Congress followed 'a unity-cum-struggle policy'¹⁶⁵ in the labour movement which had to face the capitalist and government counter-offensive (including employment of Pathans as strike-breakers in Bombay against Hindu workers). The Congress officially opposed the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Act (1928-9), though the majority of the Congress members were absent during the debate on the Public Safety Bill.

The complex character of the labour movement in the 1920s becomes evident when we see that an opportunistic lawyer like Manik Horny could use the workers against the Tatas in 1928, G.D. Birla could write to Purushottam Thakurdas on 16 July 1929 that Subhas Chandra Bose could be 'properly handled',¹⁶⁶ and the non-Brahmin minister, Bhaskarrao Jadav, could successfully win over Kasse and instigate the lower-caste textile workers of Bombay against the Brahmin Communist leaders.

Congress-Communist rivalry considerably weakened the labour movement. The Communists changed their strategy, after the Sixth Comintern Congress in December 1928, and 'began to keep aloof from the nationalist mainstream in a highly sectarian manner'. But the 'pressures from below' became clear when thousands of workers led by Professor Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Bankim Mukherjee and the leaders of the Workers' and Peasants' Party occupied the pandal of the Congress session at Calcutta in 1928 for two hours, *passed resolutions demanding purna swaraj*, and then quietly dispersed as Subhas Chandra, 'G.O.C.' of the volunteers did not like the demonstration.

The 'pressure from below' was manifested in powerful peasant, lower caste and youth movements in the 1920s. The peasant movements were anti-feudal, and anti-government lower class upsurges. Some of their leaders belonged to the middle class and were admirers of Gandhiji. The pro-peasant stance of the Congress leaders was not always clear in these peasant movements. Sometimes they acted as brakes. For example, the Bihar Congress did not support Swami Vidyanand against the Raja of Darbhanga. Subhas Chandra Bose and Jatindra Mohan Sengupta did

not defend peasant and sharecropper interests during the debate on the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Bill in 1928. Jitendralal Banerjee pleaded for additional rights for the peasants against the zamindars. But he opposed an amendment to give sharecroppers (bargadars) tenancy rights. The Congress leaders of Bengal did nothing to reduce jotedar domination in the 1920s. It has to be noted, however, that there was a clash between Hindu jotedars and Muslim bargadars at Pabna in August 1926. The Praja Party was formed in July 1929 in Bengal. Muslim jotedars supported its Muslim leaders, Akram Khan, Abdur Rahim and Fazlul Huq. Its prominent Hindu members were Jitendralal Banerjee, Atul Gupta and Naresh Sengupta. Agrarian discontent gave a momentum to the peasant movements, and the agrarian crisis intensified them. The 1920s witnessed no improvement in the position and living conditions of the peasants, and the Kisan Sabhas tried to voice their distress, grievances, problems and sufferings from 1918 onwards. The following are the important peasant struggles during this period:

1. Eka movement in Bara Banki in March 1922 and the anti-zamindari movement of Swami Vidyanand in North Bihar in 1922.
2. The peasant movements in Tripura and Chittagong in 1922.
3. The anti-feudal Bhil movement in Mewar led by Motilal Tejawat, who was an admirer of Gandhiji, in May 1922.
4. The spectacular peasant movement in the semi-tribal Rampa Region north of the Godavari led by Alluri Sitarama Raju between August 1922 and May 1924. Raja, who was an admirer of Gandhiji, believed in violence. He claimed to be 'bullet-proof'. After a formidable guerilla war, he was shot dead on 6 May 1924, and his followers were crushed by the Assam Rifles and Malabar Special Police.
5. The kisan movement led by Baba Ram Chandra in the 1920s against cesses, *begar*, *larai chanda* (war contribution) and the *jajmani* system. The centres of the movement were the Pratapgarh, Rai Bareilly, Sultanpur and Faizabad Districts.
6. The Kisan Movement at Neemachana in Alwar in May 1925 protested against a 50 per cent increase in the land revenue.
7. The peasant satyagraha against *begar* and fresh cesses in Bijolia in 1927 under the leadership of Vijaisingh Pathak, Maniklal Verma and Haribhau Upadhyaya. Pathak had close contacts with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, a Congress leader from UP.
8. The Akali movement led by Sewa Singh Thikriwala in east Punjab was a peasant-based movement. The Punjab Riyasati Praja Mandal, which was founded by Kharak Singh, in July 1928, demanded cancellation of the 19 per cent increase in land revenue imposed by Raja Bhupendra Singh of Patiala in 1926.

9. During 1928-9 there was a powerful peasant movement in coastal Andhra against the Madras Government proposal (1927) to raise revenue rates by $18\frac{3}{4}$ per cent.

10. The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 in Surat District of Gujarat showed the value of Gandhian constructive work. The Katri-Patidars (dominant peasant landholding caste) tilled their land with Kaliparaj (black-people) who were Dubla tribals and debt-serfs. Kaliparaj were badly exploited by the Kanbi Patidars. In 1927, the Bombay Government raised revenue rates by 22 per cent though cotton prices had been declining. The Mehta brothers urged Vallabhbhai Patel to launch a no-revenue campaign. Patel's strategy (social boycott, rural class unity, use of caste associations, *bhajans*, religious appeals like Gandhiji as deputy of the gods of the Kaliparaj, Siliya and Simaliya) was a great success. Peasants and the Kaliparaj refused to be cowed down by the threats of government officials. Ultimately the Maxwell-Bromfield Enquiry Committee found the Bardoli assessments defective. In Bardoli the enhancement was cut down from Rs 187,492 to Rs 48,648.

11. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati made an invaluable contribution to the peasant movement in Bihar in the 1920s. In collaboration with Srikrishna Sinha, he founded the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in November 1929.

12. It was during this period that the rural base for the Civil Disobedience Movement of Gandhiji was built up. In this regard, Profulla Sen in Bengal, Baba Raghav Das in Gorakhpur, T. Prakasam and Dandu Narayanraju in West Godavari, Konda Venkatapayya and Vennati Satyanarayan in East Godavari, and Unnava Lakshminarayan in Guntur, built up the Kisan base for the struggle for purna swaraj. But it was Bardoli which tested the Gandhian approach to rural problems and Gandhian methods of rural organization. Judith Brown asserts that Bardoli example had a considerable influence on Gandhiji as he planned the Civil Disobedience Movement.¹⁶⁷

Caste movements which emerged in the 1920s were divisive, conservative, and at times genuinely plebian and radical. Bhaskarrao Jadav's non-Brahmin party in Maharashtra, Fazl-i-Husain's agriculturist Unionist Party in the Punjab and the Anti-Brahman Justice Party in Madras, played the 'loyalist' role in Indian politics. In 1925, the Yadavs (*goalas*) of Muzaffarpur, Monghyr, Darbhanga and Patna districts tried to improve their social status by refusing menial services to their landlords. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati organized the Bhumihaar Brahman Sabha in Bihar. The movement of Satyashodhak rural agitators in Satara District was anti-*mahajan* and anti-landlord. This non-Brahmin movement was led by Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Gavalkar. It was anti-British. The movement of the Mahars under Dr Ambedkar was an

autonomous movement. The 'Self-Respect Movement' of 'Periyar' E.V. Ramaswami Naicker in Tamilnadu was a populist and radical movement. In Kerala, the Ezhava under Sri Narayana Guru, launched the temple-entry movement and criticized T.K. Madhavan's Sanskritizing and Gandhian leadership of the SNDP Yogam. Congress leadership in the lower caste and genuinely plebian movements was flexible. Many of the leaders of such movements like Sahajanand, Aeyappan, Kesavan, P. Gesvanandan, Singaravelu and Nana Patil strengthened the leftist trend in Indian politics and many ultimately became Communists.

The 1920s were also marked by growing militancy of urban educated youth. At a time when the cost of living was rising, there was a significant increase in the number of middle-class students, but there were no employment opportunities. 1928 and 1929 were full of youth conferences which were addressed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. A Socialist Youth Congress came into existence. N.S. Hardikar started the Hindustan Sewa Dal in Karnataka in the mid-1920s. The chronic unemployment along the educated youth promoted the recruitment of volunteers. In 1928-9, youth conferences in India raised demands for complete independence, and gave a new momentum to the struggle for purna swaraj.

5. The Salt Satyagraha

The economic and socio-political factors which galvanized the whole of Indian political life in the 1930s, had intensified the class and national contradictions and exacerbated the contradictions between the colonial regime and the various classes of Indian society in the twenties. This enabled Mahatma Gandhi to give the clarion call for the Civil Disobedience Movement. As Lord Irwin said in 1930, 'However emphatically we may condemn the civil disobedience movement, we should, I am satisfied, make a profound mistake if we underestimate the genuine and powerful meaning of Nationalism that is today animating much of Indian thought.'¹⁶⁸ Irwin looked upon the Lahore Resolution as the beginning of a 'secession movement',¹⁶⁹ though he hoped to get the full support of sober citizens.¹⁷⁰

Gandhiji's problem was to define the ends and means of civil disobedience and make it attractive to the disparate elements of Indian society.¹⁷¹ The first step he took on 26 January 1930. It was not intended as a day to start civil disobedience. On this day people all over the country were to take a pledge announcing India's determination to attain complete independence. According to Subhas Chandra, 'the Declaration' was prepared by Gandhiji himself.¹⁷² Irwin did not want to interfere with the celebrations of Independence Day though he was fully

prepared for the maintenance of law and order. The Bombay Government wished to check demonstrations. Irwin thought that there would be no dramatic departure in the Congress policy. But Gandhiji was satisfied with the popular response to the celebration of Independence Day which Hailey described as a display of stage-lightning and tea-pot thunder. It was, however, marked by a communal riot in Dacca, non-participation of Muslims in Delhi and the Punjab, and clashes between workers of the Girni Kamgar Union and Congressmen in Bombay. But still Gandhiji was waiting for the psychologically correct moment. His friend Dr Ansari warned him that it was one thing to join a procession, it was quite another to face hardship and to withstand repression.¹⁷³ Even this liberal leader felt that Gandhiji's programme ignored the need for Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji's intention was not to retreat,¹⁷⁴ but on 18 January 1930, he told Rabindranath Tagore: 'I am furiously thinking and I do not yet see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness.'¹⁷⁵ He knew well, however, that the long years of preparation had not been wasted.¹⁷⁶

In his Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhiji was brooding in silence to find out the precise form of satyagraha he should launch. He told a *Daily Express* correspondent that it should be broadbased and he would not like to cause bloodshed or destruction. Irwin was informed about this by the correspondent. Then followed Gandhiji's usual 'satyagraha talks' before direct action. On 30 January 1930, Gandhiji set down eleven points and requested Irwin to satisfy the 'very simple but vital needs of India'. The eleven points enumerated by Gandhiji were: (1) total prohibition; (2) reduction of the rupee ratio to 1s 4d; (3) reduction of land revenue by at least 50 per cent and making it subject to legislative control; (4) abolition of the salt-tax; (5) reduction of the military expenditure by at least 50 per cent; (6) reduction of the salaries of the highest grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue; (7) imposition of protective tariff on foreign cloth; (8) passage of the Coastal Tariff Reservation Bill; (9) discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder, withdrawal of all political prosecutions and abrogation of Section 124-A, Regulation III, of 1818 and the like, and permission to all Indian exiles to return; (10) abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control; (11) issue of licences to use firearms for self-defence, subject to popular control.¹⁷⁷

Gandhiji assured Irwin that if the British Government would accept the eleven points he would not press on with civil disobedience. From Irwin's point of view, the eleven points were unrealistic, high-pitched and fantastic. Mahadev Desai tells us that only salt, 'cloth boycott', temperance and land revenue were really important for Gandhiji and he

was willing to negotiate with the government on the basis of these four points.¹⁷⁸

Jawaharlal expected a positive move from Gandhiji and he did not understand the Mahatma's 'new orientation'. The *Vanguard* (organ of the Bombay Youth League) criticized Gandhiji's 'somersault'. Motilal Nehru thought that it was virtual surrender. According to R.C. Majumdar, it is impossible to discover any consistency between Gandhiji's eleven points and the Congress resolution on purna swaraj on any rational basis.¹⁷⁹ To many Congressmen, this seemed an anti-climax, a sad climb-down. The Socialists and Communists did not like the 'specific bourgeois demands', as there was no item to promote the interest of workers. S. Gopal says that the eleven points could not form a battle-cry, but the Independence Resolution was crystallized into eleven points in order to make the concept comprehensible to the ordinary people.¹⁸⁰ Sumit Sarkar holds that if the eleven points were a kind of retreat, they concretized the national demand.¹⁸¹ It was also tangible test for the willingness of the British Government to part with power. Furthermore, as Gandhiji said, the Civil Disobedience Movement had to provide room for adjustment. 'A satyagrahi's dharma is not to miss an opportunity for compromise.'¹⁸² The Congress Working Committee met in the Sabarmati Ashram from 14 to 16 February 1930. The members were obviously growing impatient. In response to the Working Committee Resolution earlier, 33 members of the Central legislature, 7 members of the provincial legislature from Bombay, 17 MLCs from Madras, 40 MLCs from Bengal, 17 MLCs from UP, 30 MLCs from Bihar and Orissa, 15 MLCs from CP and 12 MLCs from Assam had resigned. Subhas Chandra Bose and eleven Congress leaders had been sentenced to imprisonment for a year. The undertrial prisoners in the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case were committed to the sessions. The Working Committee wanted Gandhiji to proceed with surer steps. Its resolution on the Civil Disobedience Movement clearly showed the Gandhian transformation of the Congress:

In the opinion of the Working Committee, Civil Disobedience should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving Purna Swaraj, as an article of faith, and welcomes the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi and authorises him and those working with him who believe in non-violence as an article of faith to start Civil Disobedience. The Working Committee further hopes that in the event of a mass movement taking place, all those who are rendering voluntary cooperation to the government such as lawyers, and those who are receiving so-called benefits from it, such as students, will withdraw their cooperation or renounce benefits as the case may be, and throw themselves into the final struggle for freedom.

Irwin found it very hard to preserve patience with Gandhiji who wrote in *Young India* on 6 February 1930 that the British rule was a perfect personification of violence. On 2 March 1930 Gandhiji sent a politely-worded ultimatum to Irwin through a young British Quaker, Reginald Reynolds, to the effect that, unless the viceroy accepted the eleven points, he [Gandhiji] would disobey the salt laws on 11 March 1930. Irwin regretted his inability to comply. S. Gopal remarks that 'Irwin's policy gave the authority the cloak of courtesy and restraint. In civilized warfare Gandhiji was well-matched by Irwin.'¹⁸³ On 12 March 1930, Gandhiji wrote to Irwin: 'On bended knees I asked for bread and received stone instead. I repudiate this law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful mandatory of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent.' Gandhiji described the decision as the last throw of a gambler, insisting that even the risk of violence was worth it. Civil disobedience need not be stopped because of a sporadic act of violence.

According to P.H.M. Van Den Dungen, Gandhiji had been ready since 1909¹⁸⁴ (when *Hind Swaraj* was published) to use satyagraha (Judith Brown says satyagraha is a Gujarati word which Gandhiji concocted) in the struggle for swaraj. It, however, dates back to his South African days. In contradistinction with passive resistance, satyagraha is the law of love. Passive resistance does not exclude the use of physical force, whereas satyagraha excludes it.¹⁸⁵ In its broadest sense, satyagraha (truth force) is a life encompassing search for truth. All the aspects of the satyagraha discipline are deducible from Truth and are meant to foster the search for Truth and to subserve it.¹⁸⁶ Truth is the focal point of satyagraha. Shridharani traces the roots of satyagraha into Vedic, Upanishadic and Jain concepts.¹⁸⁷

A.L. Basham has shown how Gandhiji had imbibed in a middle-class Gujarati household the traditions of popular Vaishnavism and Jainism, and harmonized the non-Indian ideas of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau with the Hindu Dharma (eternal moral law). Satyagraha was ethically a great refinement of *dharna* or *prayopabeshan*.¹⁸⁸ According to Devi Prasad Chattopadhyaya, Gandhiji's concept of religion and freedom reminds one of Kant's. Kant says, 'There is no religion higher than Truth or Rightness.'¹⁸⁹ Satyagraha was both a means and an end. As it was a moral revolution it could be jeopardized by the wrong means. Satyagraha was a synonym of self-suffering. In the opinion of Romain Rolland, satyagraha was Gandhiji's greatest message to the world.¹⁹⁰ In 1924, Gandhiji wrote, 'Non co-operation and civil disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called Satyagraha. It is my *kaep-adrumdi*, *jam-i-jam* the Universal Provider, Satyagraha is search for Truth, and God is Truth, Ahimsa or non-violence is the light that reveals the Truth

to me. Swaraj for me is part of the Truth.'¹⁹¹ In Gandhiji's opinion, a satyagrahi, whether free or incarcerated, is ever victorious. He is vanquished only when he forsakes truth and non-violence and thus turns a deaf ear to the Inner Voice (the Inner Voice is the Voice of God in us or our conscience).¹⁹² It is not part of the strategy of satyagraha to plan moves months and years ahead. On non-violence Gandhiji remarked in *Young India* (23 March 1922): 'It is the first article of my faith. It is the last article of my creed.' Gandhiji's concept of non-violence differed from the orthodox Indian concept because it could serve as a very effective political weapon. 'Gandhiji's ahimsa is like Platonic Good, or to quote his own analogy Euclidean point.' His civil disobedience movement was not a novel phenomenon. The concept and acts of civil disobedience appear in the Greek legend of Antigone and the death of early Christian martyrs like Thomas Becket and Thomas Moore, and in political theories of Green, Hobbes, Locke, Schaar and Plamenatz.¹⁹³

In the struggle for purna swaraj, Gandhiji employed both forms of defensive and aggressive civil disobedience which, according to Judith Brown, was the politics of non-violent terrorism. He was not in favour of aggressive non-violent direct action. Shridharani describes his civil disobedience movement as war without violence. The aggressiveness was justified because satyagraha movements were not reform movements but actually a revolution. Civil disobedience was justified when all conventional methods had been exhausted. Gandhiji believed that real swaraj must grow from within Indian society, and India must come to her own through satyagraha. He said, 'It is the absolute right of India to misgovern herself. My heart rebels against any foreigner imposing on my country which is here called Pax Britannica.' Implicit in Gandhiji's conception of satyagraha was the idea of 'moral suasion'. Before starting the Salt Satyagraha, Gandhiji wrote to Irwin: 'I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India.' Hatred was not essential for nationalism or satyagraha. Gandhiji wanted freedom for India, but not at the expense or exploitation of others. He did not want the freedom of India if it meant the extinction of England or Englishmen.¹⁹⁴

Shridharani and Dharmpal suggest a number of reasons why the Indian people responded to Gandhiji's call for satyagraha. Besides mass awakening and the urge for freedom in the 1920s, Gandhiji's influence with the masses was, unquestionably, enormous. It is also to be borne in mind that India's long tradition of non-violence and truth is embedded in Indian culture.¹⁹⁵ According to Dharmpal, Gandhi, though not a student of history, had a much deeper insight into it than any historian. Gandhiji's satyagraha campaign aimed at welding his countrymen

together in a disciplined unity and at gathering 'the maximum support or benevolent neutrality of non-participants'.¹⁹⁶ Gandhiji's call for purna swaraj was also the call for a united front against the colonial regime. Above all, there was Gandhiji's charisma — his most effective weapon in politics.¹⁹⁷ Gandhiji was determined to carry through the Satyagraha campaign as there was no other honourable way out. As he wrote to Irwin, he had no option but to take a 'mad risk', that no victories of truth had been won without risks and also that he would prefer chaos to perpetual and gilded slavery. S. Gopal observes in this context: 'The nation was anxious to feel its strength, and its desire required to be channelled.'¹⁹⁸

Salt proved the initial vital catalyst in the struggle for purna swaraj.¹⁹⁹ It was Gandhiji's symbol of imperial exploitation to which all Indians could respond.²⁰⁰ According to Tarachand, this was a stroke of genius on Gandhi's part.²⁰¹ In 1836 the East India Company's government imposed the salt tax to secure revenue. Under the salt laws, manufacture of salt was a government monopoly. According to Gandhiji, the salt tax amounted to 9 annas per head per year.²⁰² According to the government the per capita tax amounted to little more than 3 annas per year. There was total absence of illicit manufacture of salt though there was a steady rise in its consumption. Rajendra Prasad tells us that even the poorest man did not feel the pinch of the salt tax.²⁰³ Lord Reading reluctantly doubled the salt tax to balance his budget. In 1929/30 the total revenue of the government from salt was Rs 67,646,354. Gandhiji regarded the salt tax as a true index of inhuman oppression. The tax was most iniquitous as salt is essential for both men and cattle. The choice of salt as the central issue of the satyagraha movement at first appeared eccentric even to Gandhiji's close associates. Motilal wrote to Dr Ansari that 'the thing was incredibly simple'. To Motilal, salt had become like the char-kha and fasting, another of Gandhiji's hobby horses. Jawaharlal was bewildered.²⁰⁴ In the beginning, Irwin was not at all perturbed. He wrote to Wedgewood Benn on 20 February 1930, 'At present the prospect of a salt campaign does not keep me awake at night.' But afterwards he realized the sound political instincts of Gandhiji. Irwin wrote to the Mahatma: 'You planned a fine strategy round the issue of salt.' Salt had value for a broad mass appeal and emotive publicity.

The Salt Satyagraha was 'a carefully staged drama'.²⁰⁵ There was nothing secret about it. Richard Gregg, a British journalist, who reported what was going on in Sabarmati Ashram to the Government, was well accommodated by Gandhiji in his Ashram. On 5 March 1930, Gandhiji announced his decision to lead the first band of satyagrahis from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi beach. The distance was about 241 miles and it was a march of at least 20 days. B.R. Nanda remarks:

'Sabarmati was now assuming the role which Phoenix and Tolstoy Ashram had done in South Africa.'²⁰⁶ Next day (6 March 1930) Gandhiji wrote to Irwin: 'It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me.' Vallabhbhai Patel was arrested at Ras on 7 March 1930 by a local magistrate without the prior approval of the Bombay Government. Vallabhbhai was presumably the organizer of civil disobedience with his experience at Kheda and Bardoli. He was the virtual Chief of Staff of the Congress. The Millowners Association condemned Patel's arrest. On 8 March 1930, Gandhiji addressed a public meeting of about 75,000 people in Ahmedabad. In the meeting 'Soldiers of Freedom' passed this resolution: 'Without achieving freedom for our country we shall not rest in peace nor will Government get peace. We solemnly believe that India's emancipation lies in truth and peace.'

Gandhiji set 12 March as the date for beginning the struggle. According to Rushbrook Williams, Gandhiji attached much importance to American public opinion. Just on the eve of the Dandi March Gandhiji sent a cable to T.H.K. Rezmie, Director of the Indian Independence League in New York, in which he assured Rezmie: 'The movement is absolutely peaceful. The Congress Policy of non-violence remains unchanged even in mass response.'²⁰⁷ The comment of the *Statesman* in Calcutta was: 'The Mahatma could go on boiling sea-water till the Dominion Status was attained.' *Navajivan* (9 March 1930) printed the first week's tentative itinerary for the Dandi March. The satyagrahis were 'elected'. The non-violent civil resisters were expected to have reached their zenith in physical energy and moral strength. Gandhiji realized that he would certainly be arrested. So he suggested that the Congress should take over the direction of the Salt Satyagraha. Breaking salt laws was to be followed by picketing liquor and foreign-cloth shops, non-payment of taxes, resignation of government servants and boycott of courts.²⁰⁸ Provincial Congress Committees were to be free to adopt whatever form of satyagraha suited them. Local leaders were to be obeyed by the satyagrahis who would have a free hand subject to the pledges of non-violence and truth. It has to be noted, however, that when the patidars of Ras (in Borsad taluk of Kheda district) requested permission from Gandhiji for starting immediate non-payment of revenue, the Mahatma was rather reluctant.

In the prayer meeting of 11 March 1930, which had a record attendance, Gandhiji said: 'Our case is strong, our means the purest and God is with us. There is no defeat for satyagrahis till they give up truth. I pray for the battle which begins tomorrow.' That night perhaps the only person in Sabarmati Ashram who slept was Gandhiji himself.²⁰⁹ Next day (12 March 1930), with 'Victory or Death' as his motto, the sixty-one-year-old mahatma with 78 satyagrahis (including Hindus, Muslims,

Christians, untouchables, scholars, newspaper editors and weavers) began this Dandi March. Jawaharlal was jubilant and he paid an eloquent tribute to the Mahatma: 'Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek. . . . The fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell and men of common clay feel the spark of life.' Jawaharlal made a fervent appeal to the youth of India: 'The field of India lies before you, the flag of India beckons to you, and freedom herself awaits your coming. . . . Will you be mere lookers-on in this glorious struggle? Who lives if India dies? Who dies if India lives?'²¹⁰ Jawaharlal was irritated when the Communists described the civil disobedience movement as a manoeuvre of the Indian bourgeoisie to obtain certain economic concessions from the British Government.

At first Irwin thought that the Salt March would end in a fiasco. But on 13 March 1930, he wrote to Wedgewood Benn: 'Most of my thought at the moment is concentrated upon Gandhiji.' Sykes, the Governor of Bombay, was in favour of arresting Gandhiji. But Irwin differed. Warnings to Government came from Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mohamed Ali. Vithalbhai Patel suggested negotiation between Gandhiji and Irwin; the latter flatly refused. Evidently Irwin did not take the breach of salt laws seriously. He thought that the march would peter out in failure and that there was no need to martyrize Gandhiji prematurely.²¹¹ The value of the salt and the offence of collecting the salt was so trivial! A committee of two senior officers reported that the price of salt would be unaffected. The Collector of Kaira wanted the Salt March to be prohibited. There was no provision in law which permitted this. It was suggested that Gandhiji could be arrested under Section 117 of the Indian Penal Code. But this was bailable. Most of the officials like Tollemham (a member of the Central Board of Revenue) belittled the effect of the Salt March. The Bombay Government directed the district magistrates to improve the morale of the 'loyalists' and follow a policy of waiting on events.

The Dandi March was peaceful and impressive. Villagers cheered, watered the roads and carpeted them with green leaves and flowers. The Mahatma walked so fast that the satyagrahis found it difficult to keep pace with him. His daily routine was to rise at 4 a.m., conduct the morning prayer, address meetings in villages, write articles for *Navajivan* and *Young India*, give press interviews, enquire from the villagers about revenue demand and salt consumption, do his daily quota of spinning and spread his message of khadi and swaraj. The Salt March did a great deal to promote the ideas of satyagraha. The satyagrahis slept in the open, ate the simplest raw food, sparing betel nuts, bedding and sweets. Some satyagrahis tried to get vegetables and fresh milk by lorry

from Surat, use motorcars and employ labourers to carry heavy kerosene lamps. They complained of the physical strain. Gandhiji's harsh regulations stopped such attempts. Jawaharlal, who joined the Mahatma briefly on the Salt March, remembered it as the most significant picture of Gandhiji he could call to mind.²¹²

Excitement built up when Gandhiji announced that he would not return to Sabarmati until the salt tax was repealed. All along his march to Dandi, Gandhiji in his meetings emphasized how his march was a pilgrimage. In the pilgrim's progress, meetings at Nadiad drew a crowd of 20,000, at Anand 10,000, Broach 15,000 and Surat 30,000. In his speeches, Gandhiji asked the people to give up drink, to take up the picketing of foreign cloth and devote their time to spinning. He made a special appeal to women to join in this non-violent warfare.²¹³ Significantly, the Salt Satyagraha was not confined to men only; women also took part in it. A few weeks after the Dandi March began, Gandhiji said: 'The impatience of some sisters to join the good fight is to me a healthy sign. In this non-violent warfare, their contribution should be much greater than men's. To call women, the weaker sex is libel. If by strength is meant moral power, than woman is immeasurably man's superior.' The effect was 'miraculous'. The awakening of women redoubled the energy and activities of the satyagrahis. While Gandhiji was marching from village to village, an intense propaganda was carried on by the satyagrahis urging people to give up government service and prepare for the non-payment of taxes.

Gandhiji was aware of the danger inherent in the civil disobedience movement. As he wrote: 'There is danger in civil disobedience, only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and it has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence.' Jawaharlal tells us that 'as people followed the fortunes of the marching column of pilgrims from day to day, the temperature of the country went up.' The All India Congress Committee met at Ahmedabad on 21 March 1930. The resolution Gandhiji drafted for the AICC meeting at Sabarmati was passed with few alterations. The resolution ran as follows: 'The Committee hopes that the whole country will respond to the action taken by Gandhiji so as to bring the campaign for Purna Swaraj to a speedy and successful issue.' Both Motilal and Jawaharlal were present at the AICC meeting at Ahmedabad. As Congress President, Jawaharlal was given special powers to act for the All India Congress Committee. The Congress anticipated arrests of Congress leaders once mass civil disobedience got under way. Jawaharlal as Congress President was to nominate replacements and succession to the Working Committee. Similar powers were vested in the lower level of the party organization. From Ahmedabad Motilal and Jawaharlal went to Jambosar (a small village in the

Broach District) where they met Gandhiji. It was at Jambosar, on 23 March 1930, that Motilal announced his decision to donate Anand Bhawan (his palatial home at Allahabad) to the Congress. Henceforth, Anand Bhawan was to be known as Swaraj Bhawan.

While addressing the public meeting at Navsari Gandhiji said, 'Either I shall return with what I want or my body will float in the ocean.' But Irwin and the government officials underestimated him and the Salt Satyagraha which they thought would die of ennui. According to official reports, the Muslims were hostile, Bengal was not enthusiastic; the Madras Government thought it theatrical; the Government of the Punjab considered the march rather a 'frost'; in short, the 'Gujarati Bania' (Mahatma Gandhi) attracted little support outside Gujarat. Gandhiji reached Dandi on 5 April 1930. His journey had lasted 24 days. Next day, he offered his morning prayers, took a bath in the sea and broke the salt law by picking up a lump of natural salt. There was not a single policeman in sight at Dandi. According to the official version, 'an orderly crowd' of 2,000 gathered in 'holiday mood' (many of them arrived in motorcars and lorries) to watch the 'mad venture' of a crazy visionary.

The technical breach of the salt law by Gandhiji on 6 April 1930 was described by Sarojini Naidu with the cry: 'Hail Deliverer!' Durgabai Ammal was among the 100-odd satyagrahis who attempted to break the salt law by boiling sea water. Later Sarojini Naidu actively participated in the Salt Satyagraha with 50 women volunteers. On 6 April, the salt law was broken throughout India by at least 5 million people at over 5,000 meetings. According to Louis Fischer, it was an 'insurrection without arms'.²¹⁴ The people responded to Gandhiji's call for the celebration of the National Week in 'war' against the Salt Tax. Only coastal parts of India could become the bases for a sustained campaign, physical conditions were unsuitable in many places, and illegal manufacture of salt became difficult with the onset of the monsoon. On 8 April, Gandhiji urged the satyagrahis to resist the police, if they tried to snatch away the salt picked up by them, until blood was spilt.²¹⁵

From Dandi, Gandhiji sent the message to the Salt Satyagrahis: 'Let the fist be broken, but let there be no surrender of salt.' Next day he issued a statement to the press in which he appealed to the Congress workers and the villagers to fetch or manufacture contraband salt; to picket liquor shops, foreign cloth shops; and opium dens; to burn foreign cloth and use khaddar; to urge students to boycott government schools and government servants to resign their service and to launch a movement against untouchability. On 13 April Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya launched the boycott of foreign cloth campaign in the Punjab. It has to be noted that he had not endorsed the resolution of purna swaraj and also had not resigned from the Legislative Assembly. But

when the Government of India proposed a Cotton Textile Industry (Protection) Bill in the Assembly (which gave in effect 5 per cent Imperial Preference), Malaviya resigned from the Legislative Assembly on 2 April 1930. The 'business pressure' in the struggle for purna swaraj becomes evident from the fact that it was through Birla that Malaviya's interview with the American Consul (G.M. Abbot) was arranged on 2 May at Birla House in Calcutta.²¹⁶

On 14 April, Jawaharlal was arrested for 'violating the Salt-Law' in Allahabad, when he was to leave for Raipur to address a conference. Besides Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, as President of the Congress, directed operations from Congress headquarters in Allahabad. Jawaharlal issued a stream of circulars to Salt Satyagrahis. In his directive on 'Defence in Political Cases', Jawaharlal said: 'If volunteers are arrested for civil disobedience, it is clear that there can be no question of offering defence . . . [they] should take up a dignified attitude in Court . . . [and] give no information . . . our very creed at present is sedition and there can be no denial of this. . . .'²¹⁷ Jawaharlal was sentenced to six months' confinement in Naini Central Prison.

On Gandhiji's advice, Jawaharlal nominated his father as the 'acting President' of the Congress. Motilal exhorted the people of India to force the jail doors open. Salt became the symbol of national defiance and mass upsurge. For instance, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, the Mayor of Calcutta, openly read seditious literature in a public meeting. Congress volunteers began to organize the boycott of foreign cloth, liquor and British goods all over the country. Following the conviction of Jawaharlal and Jatindra Mohan Sengupta there was almost a 'national uprising' in Calcutta. In Karachi there was a mob-police clash over trial of salt Satyagrahis on 16 April. There were demonstrations at Patna and Peshawar. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was arrested at Peshawar. Demonstrations by the people followed, and hundreds were killed in police firing. The platoons of the Garhwal Rifles refused to fire on the Muslim demonstrators and were court-martialled. For ten days (25 April to 4 May), Peshawar was in the hands of the people. On 24 April, Gandhiji announced that he would lead a satyagraha 'raid' on the Dharsana and Chharveda Salt Works. Rajagopalachari organized a salt march from Trichinapally to Vedararniyam on the Tanjore coast. On 27 April there was a police-satyagrahi clash on Madras beach. On 1 May 1930, Gandhiji condemned the repressive policy of the Government by describing it as 'Goonda Raj' before which Dyerism paled into insignificance.

Repression was intensified by the revival of the Press Act of 1910, arrests on a large scale, confiscation of illegally collected salt, banning of processions and meetings, fines, lathi charges and searches of even women in purdah. On the same day, Annie Besant composed a poem

entitled 'O India! Awake; Arise!' Next day there was an uprising in Amritsar. As the salt satyagraha was rapidly gaining momentum, the Bombay Branch of the European Association requested the Governor of Bombay to show greater firmness in dealing with the satyagrahis. On 5 May 1930, Gandhiji was arrested at 12.45 a.m. at Karadi, a village three miles from Dandi, when he was asleep in his hut. This was under Bombay Regulation XX of 1827. 'At the dead of night, like thieves they came to steal him away.' He was whisked away in a car to Yeravada Jail near Pune. No trial was held. In his cell Gandhiji translated the lines of Kabir. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Christian Science Monitor* maintained that Gandhiji's arrest was justifiable and inevitable. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* remarked: 'Gandhi in jail may be much more troublesome than Gandhi outside.' Next day there were mob-police clashes at Delhi, Calcutta and Sholapur. An explosion of protest followed in the form of salt marches, salt-peddling, courting arrest, and suffering police attacks, all over the country. The Salt Satyagrahis were taken to gaols handcuffed and bound with ropes. There was forcible breaking of meetings, shooting, and confiscation of property. Gandhiji's arrest stimulated resistance to the government. Abbas Tyabji took Gandhiji's place as the leader of the Salt Satyagraha. But he also was arrested. Then followed a series of salt raids on salt depots by the satyagrahis. Among the heroic non-violent salt raids, particularly to be mentioned are the Dharsana (Surat) raid on 21 May and the Wadala raids between 22 May and 1 June 1930, when nearly 15,000 satyagrahis participated in the action.

Webb Miller, the American correspondent of the United Press, writing for the *New Freeman*, has left a vivid eyewitness account of the Dharsana raid²¹⁸ which was led by Mrs Sarojini Naidu. Miller's telegraphic messages to Sarojini were withheld. He was detained at Bulsar on the way to Dharsana. But he managed to reach Dhingri (6 miles from Dharsana) by a goods train and then walked six miles to Dharsana. Miller found there 2,500 satyagrahis in thatched sheds. On 21 May 1930, Sarojini Naidu said in the prayer meeting before the Dharsana raid: 'Gandhi's body is in jail, but his soul is with you. India's prestige is in your hands, you must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows.' Then, in silence, Sarojini led the half-mile march of the satyagrahis to the salt-depot at Dharsana. Among the satyagrahis were Imam Sahib (Gandhiji's old colleague in South Africa), Pyarelal (Gandhiji's secretary) and Manilal Gandhi (Gandhiji's second son). Manilal moved forward at the head of the marchers shouting *Inqilab Zindabad*. The salt pans were protected by barbed wire and ditches and guarded by 400 Indian policemen and half a dozen British officers. The satyagrahis refused to obey when the police ordered them

to retreat. The large force of police then methodically and mechanically rained lathi-blows on the heads of the Salt Satyagrahis. Miller tells us that not one of the marchers raised an arm to fend off the blows, and that there were no signs of wavering or fear. 320 satyagrahis were arrested and two of them died. The Dharsana raid clearly demonstrated the spirit of fearlessness, self-sacrifice and self-discipline which Gandhiji had instilled in the minds of the satyagrahis. Fischer says, that Gandhiji made England powerless and India invincible.²¹⁹

'The whole country was ablaze from end to end,' wrote Pattabhi Sitaramayya.²²⁰ In the Salt Satyagraha not less than 60,000 Indians were gaoled. Among those convicted for breach of the salt laws, besides Gandhiji and Jawaharlal, were Motilal Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta, B.G. Kher, K.M. Munshi, Lilavati Munshi, Devdas Gandhi, Manilal Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Govind Ballabh Pant, Imam Sahib, Nur Muhammad, Syed Mahmud, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Mahadev Desai, Vithalbhai Patel, Nilkantha Das, Rajendra Prasad, Abdul Bari, Baldev Sahay, Mathura Prasad, Sita Ram Dubey and Mathura Singh. In Malabar, salt marches were organized by Kelappan (a Nair Congress leader) and in the Andhra districts (East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur) too the Salt Satyagraha was successful. In Orissa, particularly in the Balasore, Cuttack and Puri Districts, the Salt Satyagraha under Gopabandhu Chowdhury was very effective.²²¹ In Bihar, Chandrika Prasad organized the Salt Satyagraha in the district of Palamau. Even the pentup emotions of the Tana Bhagats and Oraons at Hutap burst forth when they refused to pay Chaukidari Tax and raised their voices against the landlords.

A significant feature of the Salt Satyagraha was the tremendous response from women. On 25 June 1930, Indian women residing in London in a meeting condemned the repressive policy of the Government of India. On 2 July about 500 satyagrahis under the leadership of Kasturba Gandhi and Abida Tyabji picketed the shops at Mota Manir in Surat. In spite of the repressive policy of the government there was a nation-wide violation of the salt law throughout 1930. On 11 November 1930, P. Krishna Pillai made a heroic defence of the national flag in the face of lathi-charge on Calicut beach.

It is interesting to note the reactions to the Salt Satyagraha of world public opinion. The first impulse of the British Government was to ridicule the 'Kindergarten stage of revolution'. But, as Gandhiji's movement gained momentum, there was a change in the British attitude. On 6 July 1930, at a meeting held in London, the National Council of the Independent Labour Party passed a resolution condemning the repressive policy of the Government of India. After two days, the King Emperor inaugurated India House in London and expressed the hope that

India would steadily advance to 'an assured place among the great people of the Earth'. Justifying the government action against the Salt Satyagraha, Irwin wrote to the King Emperor: 'The police for a long time had to refrain from action. After a time this became impossible, and they eventually had to resort to sterner methods.'²²² Irwin's hopes of a speedy collapse of the Civil Disobedience Movement were belied. The British were extremely sensitive about American opinion on India, particularly when the reports of Webb Miller received wide publicity in the U.S.A. During 1929-30, a good number of Americans (Kirby Page, the editor of *World Tomorrow*; Sherwood Eddy, Secretary of the Asian Branch of the Y.M.C.A.; William Kirk of Pomona College; and Herbert A. Miller, Professor of Sociology at Ohio State University) met Gandhiji and found him a real force in India. A significant role was played by the publication of some books like Rev J.T. Sunderland's *India in Bondage: Her Right to Freedom*, William James Durant's *The Case for India*, and C.F. Andrews's, *Mahatma Gandhiji's Ideas including Selections from his Writings*. Andrews got Gandhiji's autobiography published in the United States. These books attributed India's ills largely to British imperialism. From Rushbrook Williams and Edward Thompson to Baldwin, Lord Meston, and Ramsay MacDonald, all realized the importance of American opinion and the growing anti-British propaganda in the U.S.A. Haridas T. Mazumdar and Newton Phelps Stokes, II, of Yale University came from U.S.A. to participate in the Dandi March. After Gandhiji's arrest Haridas met Motilal Nehru who advised him to go back to America and interpret to the American people the true story of the struggle for purna swaraj; Motilal requested the Bombay Congress Committee to provide Haridas T. Mazumdar financial assistance for his passage to the U.S.A. Madan Mohan Malaviya too wanted that the American public should be accurately informed about the Salt Satyagraha. Mazumdar returned to the U.S.A. in August and he came to be known there as an emissary of Gandhiji. It is also significant that in the U.S. Senate the question of Indian independence was raised again by Senator John Blaine on 17 July 1930. G.M. Abbot, the American Vice-Consul in Calcutta stated that Gandhiji would have accepted dominion status if offered by the British Government. He felt that the Salt Satyagraha would not go in vain. The *New York Times* published a long article by C.F. Andrews (6 April 1930) on the Salt Satyagraha. Syed Husain and Taraknath Das published many articles on the Indian problem. The *Springfield Daily Republican* compared Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha with 'Boston's short way with tea'. The *Business Week* (14 May 1930) remarked that the motive of the Salt Satyagraha was economic. According to the *Baltimore Sun*, the Civil Disobedience Movement would influence the whole course of history. The *New York World* remarked that it was unfortunate that the most civilized empire of the West failed to come to an understanding with

such a noble leader like Gandhiji. Joseph Washington described Gandhiji as the world's unique leader and the greatest of all makers of Asia. The *New York Times* and the *Christian Century* were convinced of Gandhiji's mistake in precipitating the Civil Disobedience Movement. The American liberals were deeply moved when they read about the police atrocities in the Salt Satyagraha. The *New Republic* and the *Nation* were extremely vocal about it. On 10 May 1930, even the Communists of America demanded immediate release of Gandhiji. In the context of the Salt Satyagraha, Americans recalled William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery movement, the philosophy of Tolstoy and Emerson and also Thoreau's (the author of European Civil Disobedience) protest movement in America's war with Mexico in 1846-7.

Thus the Salt Satyagraha drew the attention of the world, though not for the first time, to India's struggle for purna swaraj. Judith Brown makes a gentle assertion that it probably marked the peak of Gandhiji's political influence over his countrymen and the British raj.²²³ One may differ with her on this assessment of the significance of Gandhiji's 'second continental campaign of non-cooperation'. But few will deny that through the Salt Satyagraha, Gandhiji did succeed in identifying a symbol of imperial exploitation to which eminent Muslim leaders like Abbas Tyabji, Abul Kalam Azad, Dr Ansari, Dr Rajab Ali, Syed Mahmud, Tassaduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan responded. It should not be forgotten that the Jamiatul Ulema, the Khudai Khidmatgars, the Nationalist Muslim Party and the Ahrarul Islam took a prominent part in the movement. According to Tara Chand, even Choudhury Khaliquzzaman, who regarded the independence proposal and movement as a colossal blunder, acted as 'Dictator' of the Congress during the last months of 1930.²²⁴ Judith Brown, however, draws our attention to the active sympathy of the Hindus only in the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhiji's failure to make the movement an integral force in the area of communal harmony and, above all, Gandhiji's failure to convince the Muslim politicians or the Muslim masses that he was a leader worth following.²²⁵

The Salt Satyagraha also reveals Gandhiji as a 'master strategist', and also 'a determined Gandhi' who could accept the challenge when his philosophy of non-violence faced a crisis of credibility and viability. It satisfied Jawaharlal Nehru too who deplored India's middle-class approach to politics with no verve, no dash, no jumping into the fire and no gambling for big stakes. The awakened nationalism came to possess the Indian mind. *The Searchlight* wrote on 9 April 1930: 'The thrill of a new hope, the surge of a new aspiration, the pursuits of a noble ideal and romance of a new sacrifice have surcharged the atmosphere.' The mass upsurges of the 1930s flowed from the Salt Satyagraha. It was not

confined to men. Women also took a prominent part in it. Above all, it was, as Negley Farson pointed out, an epic contest of faith against force — probably the 'most important battle of modern history'. The *Literary Digest* of America noted that Gandhiji, 'a frail shell of a man' challenged a mighty empire 'with a smile and a shrug'.

6. Mass Upsurges

What surprised Jawaharlal most at Naini Gaol was Gandhiji's amazing power of making heroes out of clay. Even the ordinary convicts said, 'Swaraj is coming.'²²⁶ It was, as Louis Fischer said, 'India's new sense of freedom'.²²⁷ According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the miraculous mass awakening in this heroic period demonstrated the great power of non-violence.²²⁸ But in fact different strands entered the mass upsurges of the 1930s, and not all of them were organized in the idiom of Gandhian politics. For instance, the Santals in 1930 took up illegal distillation of liquor on a large scale under the banner of Gandhiji! In the Salt Satyagraha too, Gandhiji wanted 'controlled mass participation'. Judith Brown asserts that the mass support was not truly Gandhiji's political support.²²⁹ He derived his strength from dedicated satyagrahis, and no wonder 'the official type of Gandhian Civil Disobedience Movement' had its natural starting points in Gandhiji's ashrams at Bardoli, Kheda, Banhura, Arambagh and Bihpur. The Indian National Congress led the Civil Disobedience Movement, and Gandhiji knew that the main problem in a mass upsurge would be control and cohesion. S. Gopal maintains that the Civil Disobedience Movement was in fact a 'War'²³⁰ as there were 'Dictators' and 'War Councils'.

The peasantry gave the Congress organization its real strength and the lower middle class formed its backbone. But in 'the new atmosphere' created by Gandhiji, even the upper bourgeoisie thought it safe to be friendly with the Congress.²³¹ Judith Brown has aptly pointed out that Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience Movement provided 'an umbrella for a host of protest movements',²³² in which Gandhian restraints of non-violence were broken down, particularly 'pressures from below'. There was also an alarming recrudescence of terrorist activities and movements in various parts of India.²³³ The patriotic urges of the lower middle-class youth could not find expression only through Gandhian nationalism.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was 'national in its geographical spread', with the stated objective of complete independence. It was not confined to elite politicians. It marked a definite advance in radicalization over the Non-cooperation Movement because it was a deliberate violation of the law.²³⁴ According to the India League Delegation Report, the Civil Disobedience Movement was not an encouragement to vio-

lence and crime. It was lawless, because it was a defiance of the existing law which was not based on the consent of the people. 'Civil Disobedience thus became both a moral protest and weapon of attack on the present system of administration.'²³⁵ Evidently there were elemental popular enthusiasm and radicalism as well as militant and sporadic pressures from below. With the slump in agricultural prices, the movement gained momentum in rural areas. An attempt was made to paralyse rural administration by a no-rent campaign and large-scale resignation of village officials. Rural militancy was spontaneous, but it was uncoordinated and sporadic. The outlook of 'village Gandhians' was rather limited. According to Sumit Sarkar, this was a basic weakness of the entire Civil Disobedience Movement. However, the movement in the countryside had no resemblance to 'La Grande Peur'.²³⁶ Jawaharlal noted the weakness of the urban movements in the 1930s.²³⁷ The widespread and deep support of the Civil Disobedience Movement developed where local leaders adapted the anti-British upsurge to suit local needs. J. Gallagher observes that there was an uneasy balance between local and central aims.²³⁸ Therefore, the mass upsurges of 1930s became a series of loosely coordinated local conflicts.²³⁹

Participation of social classes also varied between regions as well as over time. On the whole, labour militancy declined sharply in the 1930s. Sumit Sarkar says that there was no major labour upsurge in 1930. But we have to take into account the Sholapur upsurge, clashes of police with dock-labourers in Karachi, the Choolai Mill-workers' strike in Madras, and also strikes of Calcutta upcountry transport workers and Budge Budge mill-hands. In April 1930 Abdul Momin, a communist militant, led a spectacular carters' strike against a ban on transport of goods during afternoons in Calcutta.

Massive response came from business groups. For instance, on 23 May 1930, 28 commercial bodies organized a massive procession in Bombay. Businessmen co-operated with political leaders. There was pressure from the Indian Merchants Chamber in Bombay for constitutional progress. Thakurdas put a lot of pressure on Lord Irwin. Collective pledges were taken by merchants of Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Amritsar not to import foreign goods. The leaders of the mercantile community like Birla, Walchand Hirachand, Lalji Naranji and Thakurdas (who were loyalists in 1921) and also Jamnalal Bajaj, who strongly desired financial autonomy, supported the Civil Disobedience Movement. Bajaj was treasurer of the Congress for many years and went to jail in 1930.²⁴⁰ He was a Congress activist. The movement was most successful in the Gandhian strongholds of Gujarat, UP, Bihar, and coastal Andhra. The bourgeois participation in towns and controlled peasant mobilization made the movement effective on issues selected by

the Gandhian leadership — like salt, no revenue campaign, non-payment of *chaukidari* tax, picketing of liquor shops and of excise licence auctions, boycott of Forest Department auctions, peaceful mass violation of grazing and timber restrictions, satyagraha for change of forest laws and boycott of the September 1930 Legislative Assembly elections. There were clear signs of spillover of mass upsurges into states of Mysore and Chhatarpur in Bundelkhand. In the opinion of Sumit Sarkar, October 1930 may be taken as a rough dividing line between the two phases of the Civil Disobedience Movement.²⁴¹

It is difficult to say whether the Civil Disobedience Movement was an unqualified advance in every respect over the Non-cooperation Movement. In Bengal, the central leadership was more effective in 1921 than in 1930. Assam could not regain the heights attained in 1921-2 due to the social tensions between the Assamese and the Bengalis, between the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal and the Hindus. In 1930 the intelligentsia participation in UP was less than in 1921. Muslim participation was low in comparison to that of the Non-cooperation Movement. It is true, however, that many Muslim leaders joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Congress did win over a large contingent of lower-class Muslims²⁴² and in the massive Muslim upsurge in Peshawar on 4 May 1930, the leaders demanded the release of Mahatma Gandhiji with cries of *Inqilab Zindabad*. Gyan Pandey has shown that Muslim participation was virtually absent in UP. Among the political convicts in Allahabad, only 9 were Muslims.²⁴³ It is to be borne in mind that the Muslim League in the Allahabad session openly opposed the Civil Disobedience Movement. The elemental fervour of the Non-cooperation days was absent in Coastal Andhra. Kalyanasingapur in the tribal belt of Andhra was a base of forest satyagraha in 1921. But there was no such attempt in the 1930s. There was more response from the students and lawyers in 1921-2 than in 1930.

It may be recalled that at the Lahore Congress, Gandhiji rejected a call for boycott of schools and courts. In the Civil Disobedience Movement, students were not encouraged by the Congress to withdraw from schools and colleges, though they were urged to participate fully in the movement to the extent of suspending their studies. Many students were arrested and convicted in connection with the movement. In many government schools, pupils left their institutions. The Governor of the United Provinces urged the vice-chancellors of Allahabad, Lucknow and Agra Universities to discourage students from participating in political activities as the danger had been aggravated by 'a spread among students of doctrines of a communistic origin'.²⁴⁴ In Assam there was a successful student strike against the Cunningham Circular banning students' participation in politics. Another notable feature of the Civil

Disobedience Movement was the participation of teenagers. By 15 November 1930, 2,050 teenagers (all below 17) were arrested. Motilal Nehru's twelve-year-old granddaughter, Indira (later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi), drilled the children's volunteer army (Vanar Sena) in Allahabad. From the Naini Gaol Motilal wrote to Indira: 'What is the position in the "monkey army"? I suggest the wearing of a tail by every member of it, the length of which should be in proportion to the rank of the wearer.'²⁴⁵ According to Thakurdas, the degree of mass sympathy for the Congress in 1930 was greater than in 1921.²⁴⁶ Judith Brown points out in this connection that mass sympathy for the Congress was one thing, and mass involvement quite another. The number of jail-goers was at least three times the 1921-2 figure. Jawaharlal estimated it to have been 92,124. R.C. Majumdar remarks, 'The whole country seemed to be in jail.'²⁴⁷ The official estimate of Civil Disobedience Movement prisoners in jail in February 1931 was 23-24,000 and 60,000 the number who had been through jail in the course of the movement. Below is the official estimate of prisoners in jail on 15 November 1930:

(1)	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
	27,354	1,152	548	20,054
(2)	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Total</i>
	28,695	359		29,054
(3)	<i>Juveniles under 17: 2,050</i>			

By contrast with the Non-cooperation Movement, the technique of the Congress for enforcing boycotts in 1930 was more effective. Sethna, who was of the opinion that the Civil Disobedience Movement led to the economic ruin of the country, pointed out that the merchant class very strongly supported the movement. Congress workers extracted pledges from them not to order or sell foreign cloth. Effigies of the reluctant merchants were 'cremated' with mock mourning. Women satyagrahis played a prominent part in boycott activities. Motilal Nehru and S. Banker tried to secure the co-operation of Bombay and Ahmedabad millowners. Irwin wrote to Wedgewood Benn on 24 April 1930, that the mercantile community gave support to Gandhiji only in the later stages of the movement. In Calcutta, Bhagalpur, Delhi, Amritsar and Bombay the foreign cloth trade came to a virtual standstill. In March 1931 Amritsar's biggest piecegoods business (that of C.L. Nayar) was completely smashed. Winfield H. Minor, American Vice-Consul in Bombay, reported that the boycott of foreign goods was really directed against British goods which created a favourable atmosphere for American, German and other foreign goods to enter the Indian market. Consequently, there was a steep fall in British cloth imports from £ 26 million in 1929 to £ 13.7 million in 1930. Quantity-wise the fall was from 48 million yards in 1929/30 to only 23 million yards in 1930/31.

Civil disobedience marked a major advance in the emancipation of Indian women. Women of the most orthodox and aristocratic families participated. Mary Campbell, the noted temperance worker, was amazed at this new phenomenon of awakening among Indian women. On 10 July 1930, the Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau noted that this awakening had spread among women in rural areas. According to UP Police Inspector-General Dodd, many 'loyal' police officers were taunted and abused by their female relatives.²⁴⁸ George Slocombe of the London *Daily Herald* also tells us about the enthusiasm of women in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Commenting on the advent of fairly large number of women satyagrahis in 1930, Jawaharlal wrote in his *Discovery of India*: 'Most of the menfolk were in prison. Then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course, but now there was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British Government but their own menfolk by surprise.' While the names of Mira Behn, Nellie Sengupta, Smt Bedi, Hansa Mehta, Smt Kale, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Shanti Das, Lilavati Munshi and Smt Jairani are quite familiar, others like Gosi Captain, Maina Devi, Radha Bai Subbarayan, Sofia Somji, Moti Bai, Preetilata Waddedar, Kalpana Dutt, Khorshedbehn (granddaughter of Dadabhai Naoroji), Rukmani Laxmipathi and Padamsani Ammal are little known. There are still other satyagrahis like Mungla Behn, Chameli Devi, Bachhu Behn, Trisula Daru, Santaben Patel, Leela Syed, Perin Captain and Vijayalakshmi Astar who are literally unsung freedom fighters. On June 25, Indian women residing in London in a meeting condemned the repressive policy of the government. On 25 July, the Nari Satyagraha Committee offered satyagraha by squatting on the Upper Circular Road in Calcutta. After two days Hansa Mehta inaugurated a Boycott Week in Bombay. Mrs Kale was president of the 'War Council' in the Central Provinces. Sarojini Naidu, and Durgabai Ammal played an important part in the Salt Satyagraha, while Rajkumari Amrit Kaur urged women to wear khadi, wash khadi, and hawk khadi. In the salt campaign, Matangini Hazra hoisted the national flag on the heavily cordoned Tamluk Court and was belaboured mercilessly. Amongst the freedom fighters of Bihar in the Civil Disobedience Movement, Mrs Nawal Kishore, Saraswati Devi, Sadhana Devi, Mrinmoyee Devi and Meera Devi must be specially mentioned. According to H.N. Brailsford, if the Civil Disobedience Movement accomplished nothing else but the emancipation of the women of India it would have justified itself.

Of the awakening of both men and women in the days of struggle for purna swaraj, the Nehru family were a fine example. Motilal initially did not like the idea of 'the womenfolk' of his family rushing outside home.

But his ideas changed when the Congress was subjected to the sternest repression from April 1930 onwards. Jawaharlal was arrested on 14 April and taken to Naini Gaol. Motilal was nominated by his son as 'acting President' of the Congress. He was keeping indifferent health and Dr Ansari communicated his findings to Gandhiji; Motilal refused to take rest and expended the last of his energy in helping Gandhiji to organize the Civil Disobedience Movement. He wrote to Jawaharlal's wife, Kamala: '... every wearer of a Gandhi cap is not a follower of Gandhi.' Motilal took a keen interest in the work of the Peshawar Inquiry Committee of which his son-in-law, Ranjit Pandit, was secretary. On 11 September, Ranjit Pandit was arrested. In June 1930, Motilal went to Bombay with his wife Swarup Rani and Kamala. On 30 June Motilal was arrested and taken to Naini Gaol. Even before Motilal's arrest, Swarup Rani, Kamala, Vijayalakshmi, Krishna, and Shyam Kumari Nehru were in the front line of the movement. They organized processions, addressed meetings and took a leading role in picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops in Allahabad and surrounding villages in the summer of 1930. Jawaharlal was deeply moved. He writes in his *Autobiography*:

We felt proud of our people, and especially of our womenfolk, all over the country. I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activities of my mother, wife and as well as many girl cousins and friends, and though I was separated from them and was in prison, we grew nearer to each other, bound by a new sense of comradeship in a great cause. By the time I came out, I expect to find the womenfolk running everything.²⁴⁹

From Naini Gaol, Motilal wrote a 'circular letter' (dated 16 July 1930) to all members of the family. Motilal wrote to his wife Swarup Rani: 'You are doing a little too much for your old bones. Use them sparingly, if you wish to see Swaraj established in your lifetime.' He gave detailed instructions to Kamala for keeping trespassers wearing Gandhi caps off Swaraj Bhawan. To Vijayalakshmi he wrote: 'You seem to be too anxious to receive an invitation [to gaol].'

When the Nehrus (Motilal and Jawaharlal) were lodged in the Naini Gaol, it appeared as if Kamala had replaced Jawaharlal. She was taken as a substitute member of the Working Committee. She helped to draw thousands of women from behind the purdah of their houses, and said: 'Neither will I sit in comfort at home nor allow any woman of Prayag to do so.' When Kamala arrived at Delhi railway station on 30 August 1930, she was greeted with cries of 'Inqilab Zindabad!' The railway authorities asked the engine drivers to keep hooting in order to drown the cries. On 5 November 1930 Kamala led a students procession in Allahabad in defiance of an order not to enter the civil lines area. Kamala Nehru's

mother, Rajpati Kaul was arrested for demanding increased Indian representation at the Round Table Conference. Vijayalakshmi's historic speech at Prayag in the Civil Disobedience Movement is worth mentioning: 'Your sons, your husbands and your fathers are in jail... like faithful wives, come out and go to jail... you are not made of wax... we should not fear.' On 11 September Vijayalakshmi's husband, R.S. Pandit, was arrested on a charge of sedition. He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

At Naini Gaol, Motilal Nehru's interviews with Slocombe, Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar regarding the Round Table Conference became the first link in the chain of events which culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact eight months later. Motilal and Jawaharlal wanted a concrete commitment from the British Government regarding the devolution of power. Motilal in prison was in high spirits. On his visit to Yeravada Gaol, Pune, for negotiations with Gandhiji, he requested Lt Colonel Martin, the Superintendent of Yeravada Gaol to provide him 'very simple and light food' which (as Jawaharlal remarked) would have been considered simple food only at the Ritz and Savoy in London.²⁵⁰

As his health was failing fast, Motilal was released on 11 September. Three days later he left for Mussourie with Swarup Rani, Vijayalakshmi and Krishna. Kamala did not accompany them though her own health had begun to fail. She was the soul of the Congress activities in Allahabad. The government had also released Jawaharlal on 11 September. Jawaharlal convened a meeting of the executive of the Provincial Congress Committee and urged the launching of a no-tax campaign in the rural areas. He also convened a district peasant's conference at Allahabad on 19 October. That day, as he was returning home with Kamala after attending a public meeting, he was re-arrested at the gates of Anand Bhawan.

Though there was blood in his sputum, Motilal took back the reins of the Civil Disobedience Movement after his son's arrest. Gandhiji thought that Motilal's love for India was derived from his love for Jawaharlal. But we have to take into account the fact that Motilal had been a member of the Indian National Congress since 1888, a year before Jawaharlal was born. On 10 November, Motilal wrote to Smt Gosi Captain of Bombay; 'I take my Gandhi cap off to the Naoroji clan for the great part they are taking in the national struggle.' He instructed the Secretary of the All India Congress Committees to intimate all Provincial Congress Committees that 16 November 1930 should be observed as 'Jawahar Day' throughout India as 'a protest against the savage sentence of two and a half years passed on to the Congress President'. On 16 November, at hundreds of meetings all over the country, Jawaharlal's seditious speech was read. At Allahabad, Swarup Rani, Vijayalakshmi,

Krishna, and Indira joined the protest march. Kamala addressed the public meeting in Purushottamdas Park in Allahabad, and read out the whole of Jawaharlal's seditious speech.²⁵¹

About 5000 persons were arrested on 'Jawahar Day'. Kamala was arrested on 1 January 1931. 'It was a pleasant New Year's gift for me,' Jawaharlal wrote to Indira. From 12 January there was a rapid deterioration in Motilal's health, but his humour remained till the last. He told Swarup Rani that he would wait in heaven to receive her. To the masseur who was attending on him (Mr Austin), he said, 'Mr Austin, how many Baby Austins do you possess?'

On the first anniversary of the Congress 'Independence Day', Irwin released Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, Kamala and the members of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhiji hurried straight from jail to Allahabad and reached Anand Bhawan late at night. Motilal held the Mahatma in the highest esteem, 'as the most revered Indian of the day', though the two minds were so strongly dissimilar, as C.F. Andrews said. Late that night, Motilal kept awake to greet Gandhi and said: 'I am going soon, Mahatmaji, and I shall not be here to see swaraj. But I know you have won it and will soon have it.' The end came in the early hours of 6 February 1931. Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit tells us that Swarup Rani accompanied Gandhiji, whom she once thought to be the wrecker of the happiness of her family, to the cremation ground. Dry-eyed Swarup Rani stood up like a lioness worthy of the mate she had lost. 'The stars were out and shining brightly when we returned, lonely and desolate,' wrote Jawaharlal recalling those twilight hours.

Motilal was essentially a parliamentarian. According to K.M. Pannikar, India owes its parliamentary traditions to him. He admired Victorian England, but none could deny his essential fidelity to India. He was drawn into the national movement in the Gandhian era under the Mahatma's inspiration and also by his love for his son. Gandhiji described Motilal's 'love of his son' as his greatest quality. Yet father and son had differences in approaches to India's political problems. According to B.R. Nanda, Motilal had the clearer head, Jawaharlal had the larger vision. Motilal plunged into the unknown when he realized the unshakable resolve of his son to follow the Mahatma in the struggle for purna swaraj. But Motilal had also that rare courage to differ from Gandhiji. It is significant that in the crisis in Congress session of 1928, Subhas Chandra Bose wrote to Motilal: 'We can think of nobody else who can rise to the occasion.' Motilal loved freedom and his was indeed the voice of freedom. 'My religion is my country,' he said. He described himself as a 'peaceful revolutionary'. But to him it was the spirit of freedom that mattered, wheresoever and howsoever it manifested itself.

That is why Motilal had sympathy for revolutionaries like Chandra-shekhar Azad and the mass upsurge in India in the 1930s which, in many places, was treading on the brink of violence. Motilal was always suspicious of excessive emotion in politics, and he regretted that Indian politics had sunk into the mire of religion. 'The masses want bread. They have no time to make experiments and have no use for theories and dogmas imported from abroad' — this was Motilal's analysis of the mass upsurge in India. On his death, *The Times* of London observed on 7 February 1931: 'He was like the heavenly answer to a national prayer.' That national prayer of the teeming millions of freedom-fighters was voiced through him: 'Our highest ambition is to be buried in the foundations of a free India and then sink into obscurity to be thought of no more. . . . But we shall drop down dead in the supreme satisfaction that that noble edifice of this freedom of India shall in the fullness of time rise on our bones.'

Curiously enough, Churchill was of the opinion that the mass movement of the 1930s was led by an oligarchy of lawyers, politicians, fanatics and greedy merchants. From his viewpoint, Congress was just an alignment of diverse groups confronting the Raj. It is a fact, however, that the Civil Disobedience Movement was on the whole under Gandhiji's control and that the Congress stuck to the basic guidelines laid down by Gandhiji. Sir Malcolm Hailey pointed out that the Congress Working Committee did very little by way of organization or direction of the mass movement. He got this impression because the Congress Working Committee permitted extensive provincial flexibility. This was not the only, but one of the main causes of regional variations in the anti-British upsurge. Judith Brown maintains that there was no all-India blueprint for the Civil Disobedience Movement — it was a series of loosely co-ordinated local conflicts. She asserts that the Congress was not a modern political party with an efficient organization and sound finances. The strategy was determined by local circumstances. The Congress Working Committee's communications with Provincial Congress Committees were more of suggestions than directives. Provincial and local leaders ignored the directives of the Congress Working Committee. The Congress Committees were taken over by individuals termed 'Dictators'. On the whole, the main initiative of the movement was in the hands of Provincial Congress Committees. According to Judith Brown, the best equipped Congress organization was in the city of Bombay. Brailsford also tells us that in Bombay businessmen were prepared to face disaster. The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee regularly issued leaflets, bulletins, news-sheets. The Congress required considerable funds to organize the mass movement. Thanks to the 'Gandhian Transformation', its finances were in a healthy condition.

Precautions were taken to remove funds to safe custody. Gandhiji collected sizeable sums for the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund and the Khadi Fund (about Rs 7,60,000), Rs 50,000 from Rajab Ali, from Motilal Rs 2 lakhs, and from Birla about Rs 5 lakhs. As the movement gained momentum, local Congress funds began to dry up, particularly in Malabar, Tamilnad and Bihar.²⁵²

In the East Zone, Bengal provided the largest number of Jailgoers in the Civil Disobedience Movement — 15,000. Gallagher refers to the faction-ridden Congress (Subhas Chandra Bose and Jatindra Mohan Sengupta set up rival organizations to conduct the movement) which was criticized as being a 'predominantly urban, Hindu trader party'. Muslim participation was low. There was no effective central leadership and, at times, the Muslims were hostile. There were communal riots in Dacca and Kishoreganj which were expressions of social tensions. Muslims snatched debt-bonds from Hindu moneylenders or merchants. In Kishoreganj the drop in world jute prices hit the peasants who cultivated jute. At Kishoreganj rioting broke out with an attack on a Muslim Taluqdar's house. As the cultivators stopped paying rent, troops were sent to crush the movement.

Rural tensions were mounting in Bengal due to the sharp fall in prices. Local grievances provided the incentive. The attitude of the Namasudra communities was hostile. The movement was in the hands of rural Gandhians. There were peasant uprisings in Jhagram, Rangpur, Chittagong and Tripura, but there was no clear anti-moneylender or anti-zamindar programme. On the whole, industrial labour did not take any active part in the movement. Salt and the *Chaukidar* taxes were the two main issues in the civil disobedience in Bengal. It was supported by the Hindu middle-class population.

Calcutta *bhadralok* leaders had an urban bias, and were alienated from the rural masses, but Calcutta provided the largest number of political prisoners in Bengal. In Calcutta there were firing and lathi charges on the satyagrahis. The police entered the classrooms of the Calcutta University and beat the students. They also raided the offices of the Bengal Council of the Civil Disobedience Movement and Barabazar Congress Committee. The Nari Satyagraha Committee offered satyagraha on the Upper Circular Road. The lower middle-class youth played the most vital role in the movement in Calcutta.

Arambagh, under the influence of Gandhiji, remained non-violent. At Midnapur the Salt Satyagraha was fairly successful. The Gurkha troops unleashed a reign of terror and they did not spare the honour of women. Peasant mobilization in the Ghabal subdivision of Midnapur led to clashes with the police. In Sabang the magistrate was attacked by the

demonstrators. Sir Hugh Stephenson called it a rising. Congress volunteers and village Congress Committee took an important part in the movement in this area. Tamluk subdivision (where the bulk of the population were Mahisya cultivators) was badly affected. There was boycott of government servants, assaults on the police and intimidation of chaukidars.

The two movements — one violent and the other non-violent — went on side by side in Bengal. Chittagong afforded a good example of this trend. Even the best of the Gandhian leaders had close contact with the revolutionaries. The unpublished manuscript of Shri Sanjeev Prasad Sen,²⁵³ a veteran Congress leader and a follower of Jatindra Mohan Sengupta reveals the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on the people of Chittagong. According to Sen, the Non-cooperation Movement in the real sense started in Chittagong. In the Civil Disobedience Movement too, the response was spontaneous thanks to Jatindra Mohan Sengupta (who was born in Chittagong) and his wife Nellie Sengupta who were ardent admirers of Gandhiji. They made Chittagong a stronghold of Gandhism. Yet, Chittagong was also a centre of revolutionary activities. The armed uprising in Chittagong led by Surya Sen (Master Da) in the name of the Indian Republic Army, Chittagong Branch, on 18 April 1930, was a saga of heroic defiance of the Raj. The exploits of 57 young revolutionaries, mostly students like Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bali, Tiger Bali and Kalpana Dutt, and Ananda Gupta on the Jalalabad Range had great repercussions upon the youth and revolutionaries all over India. The Chittagong revolutionaries significantly celebrated the seizure of the armoury on Jalalabad Hill with cry, 'Gandhiji's raj has come.' Twelve of the revolutionaries were killed in the encounter. The subsequent rear-guard action against the forces of Sir Charles Tegart was a difficult one. Wandering through hills and dales, practically without food, the revolutionaries carried on their guerilla warfare up to 22 May 1930. Most of the raiders were taken prisoners, but their leader, Surya Sen, managed to escape.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid was followed by 136 terrorist actions in Bengal. On 22 September 1932, Pritilata Waddedar led a group of revolutionaries in a raid on the Railway Institute at Pahurtali, Chittagong. She was struck by a revolver shot. Pritilata evaded arrest by taking potassium cyanide. In February 1933, Surya Sen was betrayed, and caught by a Gurkha soldier in the village, Gairala. He was later hanged, but Netra Sen, the man who betrayed him, was later murdered. In 1930 Benoy Bose (a student in the Dacca Mintford Hospital School) and his friends Badal and Dinesh made a spectacular raid on Writers Building (government headquarters) and shot down the Inspector General of Prisons. To evade arrest, Badal took cyanide. Benoy shot himself dead. Dinesh, who

also shot himself, was arrested and recovered. He was tried and hanged.

In Assam, Sylhet was the principal base of the Civil Disobedience Movement. There was marked participation by students. The number of jail-goers in Assam in 1930-1 was 2,373. Aboriginal Kachari villagers violated forest laws. An Assam Rifles made a flag march through north Kamrup in January 1931. The satyagrahis in Assam had no link with plantation labour. Tea plantations were nevertheless centres of mass arrest. The movement was considerably hampered due to the hostile attitude of Tarunram Phookan and the lukewarm attitude of N.C. Bardoloi. Rayat Sabhas did not function properly till 1931.

In Orissa, Salt Satyagraha was a very effective movement as physical conditions along coastline were suitable. The principal centres were Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts.²⁵⁴ Gopabandhu Chowdhury led the Salt Satyagraha in Orissa.

The number of jail-goers in Bihar was 12,657 in 1930-1. The 'Provincial Dictator' of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bihar was Deep Narayan Singh who was an influential zamindar. Sumit Sarkar tells us that the response from big zamindars and lawyers was poor. Numerous small landlords were members of the Congress. 'Organizational strength dampened elemental outbursts.' The Bihar Provincial Congress Committee was well organized, with its own mail system. There was a very powerful 'No *Chaukidari*-tax agitation', and boycott of foreign cloth and liquor in the principal centres — Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur, Monghyr, Patna and Shahbad. With the drop in prices of agricultural products, the distress of the cultivators became more acute. But the Congress with its small-landlord links was reluctant to take up a no-rent campaign. Moreover, the incidence of land revenue and rent was lower than in UP. The Kisan Sabha Movement of Swami Sahajanand gained momentum only after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The kisan movement under Yaduians Sahay of Palamau was quite effective. Bonga Majhi and Somra Majhi led the tribal movement in Chhota Nagpur. The Congress got good response from the Tana Bhagats under the leadership of Bhuha Bhagat. Sumit Sarkar says that there was no marked response from students but we find that the Tarun Sangh (Youth League) of Ranchi did actively participate in the movement. Pramatha Nath Mukherjee of Palamau, Bajrang Sahay and Sukhlal Singh of Ranchi stirred up the students of schools and colleges. The Santhals of the Hazaribagh district joined the movement under the leadership of Bangam Manjhi. The Forest Satyagraha was popular in Singhbhum. There was considerable awakening among workers in Singhbhum. About 400 Sikhs in Jamshedpur were enrolled as volunteers for the movement.

According to Judith Brown, the Civil Disobedience Movement in UP was at first purely urban, though the urban trader's enthusiasm was short-lived. The major urban centres of the movement were Allahabad, Kanpur, Agra, Banaras and Lucknow. Kanpur caused much anxiety to the UP Government. It is significant that the socio-economic demands of the working class found no place in the Congress programme in UP. Volunteers of the Youth League and students of Allahabad, Banaras and Lucknow Universities took active part in the movement. Gyanendra Pandey has shown how students rose to leadership in the UP districts. From September 1930, UP's rural population began to show considerable interest in the movement. Many villagers were recruited as Congress volunteers.²⁵⁵

The UP Congress appealed for support to the kisans during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Jawaharlal was disappointed that rural agitation in UP had to depend on urban support. Rural radicalism could not be effective due to the opposition of small zamindars. Gyanendra Pandey is of the opinion that the relations between the Congress and peasant militancy in UP was ambivalent. Jawaharlal directed the Congress organizations to set up peasant unions in UP in order to draw the peasantry into the Civil Disobedience Movement. He gave a call for a no-tax campaign and suggested that the zamindars should stop paying revenue to the government and urged peasants to withhold rent. Pressures for a no-rent campaign mounted as prices declined sharply from September 1930, particularly in the Bulandshahr and Meerut region.

The UP Congress (of which Jawaharlal was the president) passed a resolution in March 1930 proposing that the Congress programme should include reduction of the land tax. This satisfied landlords as well as peasants. This proposal was accepted by the Congress Working Committee, but the other proposals of the UP Congress (a moratorium on all debts with only partial compensation to moneylenders and also reduction of the arbitrary powers of landlords to evict tenants) were not accepted. Thanks to Jawaharlal, the Congress organization in UP was elaborate, disciplined and widespread. According to Gyanendra Pandey, Congress control was most effective in Agra and Rai Bareilly but weak in Barabanki.²⁵⁶

As a party, the Congress had to rely on landlords, moneylenders and businessmen for funds. However, to quote Pandey, 'It was not merely its dependence on and links with privileged classes that made the Congress leadership vacillate in its approach to the masses.'²⁵⁷ During the Civil Disobedience Movement the UP Congress failed to mobilize the long-term support of the mass of the poor, especially in the villages, due to the concentration of the nationalist propaganda in the towns.

Moreover, the Congress did not speak out against moneylenders, though indebtedness was the most important problem of the masses.

The process of self-mobilization by the peasants was a feature of the mass upsurge in UP. It was during this period that socialist ideas made some headway there. M.N. Roy and his followers joined the Congress and began to spread socialist ideas in the villages adjoining Allahabad. The slogan for the no-tax campaign was endorsed in October 1930. In the autumn of 1930, Congress workers launched the 'no-rent' campaign. It was led in Rai Bareilly by Kalka Prasad. S.K.D. Paliwal successfully launched it on the Bardoli pattern in villages near Agra like Barauda and Bhilaoli.

The governor observed on 3 July 1930 that the Civil Disobedience Movement in UP had succeeded, beyond expectations, in arousing very deep sympathy among every class of Hindus. But, on the whole, an important section of UP society — the Muslims — kept aloof from the Congress. There is, however, some evidence of lumpen-proletarian elements volunteering for civil disobedience in UP.²⁵⁸

The economic straits of UP farmers indirectly benefited the Civil Disobedience Movement in Delhi. Congress organizers in Delhi could offer the UP peasants the lure of warm clothing in winter and better pay (two annas a day) and recruit them as volunteers. Congress propaganda amongst Delhi students was effective. The main features of the movement were the temperance agitation and the dislocation of the Amritsar piecegoods trade. The number of jail-goers in Delhi was 4,500.

In the Punjab, mobilization was difficult as there were no unifying issues. The unionists were loyal to the government. There were difference of opinion among Akali leaders. Kharak Singh kept aloof. Tara Singh supported the Congress. Despite hostility to Gandhian ideology, many members of the Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha and Kirti Kisan Party (which 'operated on the border-line of terrorism and Marxism') supported the Civil Disobedience Movement and courted arrest. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) was active in the Punjab. The number of jail-goers in the Punjab was 12,000. In 1930 there were 26 terrorist incidents there. On 3 December 1930, the Governor of the Punjab was fired at and injured. The Congress got good response from merchants. Cloth merchants faced bankruptcy as sale of British cloth dropped from Rs 25 lakhs to Rs 2 lakhs in July 1930. The execution of Bhagat Singh had a profound impact on urban youth and stimulated radicalism.

The peasant uprisings in Hissar District were spontaneous. Peasant-landlord relations became strained as peasants refused to pay rent and seized the crops of landlords. In Kangra there was violation of forest

regulations. Moneylenders and grain dealers were the objects of attack by Jat cultivators who were supported by the lower castes. The Riyasati Praja Mandal supported the Civil Disobedience Movement. Its propaganda among the Sikh peasantry created problems for the Maharaja of Patiala. The Akali-led Punjab Zamindar Sabha 'remained quite moderate'. Congress did try to persuade the cultivators and the zamindars not to pay land taxes, though without much success. Mobilization of Muslim and Sikh peasantry was an arduous task.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Sind was not effective, though there was a violent clash between the police and Karachi dock workers. The Muslims in rural areas particularly kept aloof. The prominent leader of the movement in Sind was Swami Govindananda. Hindu-Muslim relations were not cordial. There was a riot at Sukkur in August 1930.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Badshah Khan) and his elder brother, Khan Sahib, organized the Civil Disobedience Movement in the settled districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Hazara in the North-West Frontier Province. For his strength of character, determination and adherence to Gandhian ideology, Abdul Ghaffar Khan came to be known as the Frontier Gandhi. His followers wore red uniforms and came to be known as Red Shirts. The corps of volunteers he led was called Khudai Khidmatgars (Servants of God). In 1930 it was about 80,000 strong. The Khan brothers got the support of the urban handicraft workers and poor peasants. Mass sympathy was for them as they tried to bring about Pathan regional nationalist unity. They made a fervent appeal to the Pathans to fight against the colonial regime.

The Khan brothers decided to start the Civil Disobedience Movement in the NWFP on 20 April 1930, when peasants and frontier tribesmen were to gather for the Id celebrations. The government arrested local Congressmen as a precautionary measure. The number of jail-goers was 5,000. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was arrested on 23 April. A massive upsurge followed in Peshawar as the urban crowd rose in protest. The Pathans raised barricades against British armoured cars. At Kissakahani Bazar there was intensive firing for three hours. Thirty were killed according to the official report; non-official estimates ranged from 200 to 250. When the tribesmen joined the Peshawar uprising, the situation became tense and the Chief Commissioner was in a state of mental prostration. The British officials and urban aristocrats took refuge within the military cantonment. The Congress leaders appealed to the people to refrain from violence. Jawaharlal was shocked to hear of the police firing in Peshawar. He wrote in his *Autobiography*: 'Anywhere in India such a remarkable exhibition of disciplined and peaceful courage before machine-gun firing would have stirred the country.'²⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the Akalis fomented anti-British feelings among Indian soldiers. When two

platoons of the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles were ordered to fire on the unruly mob, they responded to the appeal of one of their comrades, Chander Singh Garhwali, and refused to fire. They were subsequently court-martialled and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. A few of their leaders were executed for mutiny. Large forces had to be requisitioned to quell the disturbances. The British troops entered Peshawar on 4 May and, by the middle of the month, British authority was restored in the city.

The Peshawar uprising was followed by mass anti-imperialist demonstrations by the Pathan peasants. The Pashto-Jirgah rallied the various detachments of Khudai Khidmatgars. Aerial bombardment was resorted to against the tribals who made armed incursions into the province in the latter part of 1930 to demand the release of *Malang Baba* (the naked fakir, Mahatma Gandhi) and Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

In the Central Zone, forest satyagraha was the most widespread, aggressive and militant form taken by the Civil Disobedience Movement. Sykes described it as a semi-religious movement. The main issue was forest laws. Forest satyagrahas were initially organized by the Central Provinces Congress Committee at Jabalpur. M.S. Aney and B.S. Moonje organized forest satyagraha in Yeotmal. Sir Montagu Butler noted the spread of forest satyagraha among women, children, poor peasants and tribes, particularly the Gonds. In Betul, Ganjan Korku was the most prominent leader of the Gonds. There were massive violation of forest laws in Seoni, Bhandara, Raipur, Betul, Amraoti and Chanda. There were 106 centres of forest satyagrahis in Berar (between July and September 1930) which were working under the direction of the Berar 'War Council'. These centres had 225 workers and 1,460 volunteers. The main tactics of the forest satyagrahis were unauthorized collection of firewood, grass cutting, arson and picketing fuel and timber auctions.

A powerful reduction of revenue campaign and no-tax campaign in Chhatarpur was led by a dacoit, Mangal Singh. On 30 December 1930, the Government had to send a military contingent to disperse a crowd of 20,000, including about a thousand armed with rifles. In Buldana district in Berar, the labourers and cultivators (cotton was the predominant crop) were exploited by merchants, moneylenders and the local landlords. So the labourers and peasants formed a peasant union which launched no-tax campaign. Organized peasant volunteers resisted tax officials, seized the property of moneylenders and landlords and set their houses on fire. The peasant volunteers belonged to different castes and religions. The Buldana rising was crushed only when troops reinforced the police. It was indeed 'a genuine uprising of the poor'.²⁶⁰

The liquor boycott campaign was fairly successful in CP. Vallabhbhai Patel tried to stop the aggressive style of picketing, particularly by the

volunteers from Jabalpur. The number of jail-goers was 2,255. Student participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was obvious from the fact that all government colleges were closed between August and October 1930. Official reports mention ten instances of 'Congress Violence' in the Central Provinces between July and October 1930.

In the West Zone, metropolitan Bombay was the principal centre of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji's name exerted an extraordinary appeal. Haig reported on 13 June 1930 that Gandhi caps filled the streets of Bombay and Congress volunteers carried on their picketing with regularity and orderliness. The large Gujarati population of Bombay (particularly employees in commercial firms — clerks, traders, businessmen)²⁶¹ wholeheartedly supported the movement. The prominent leaders were Jamnalal Bajaj, S.K. Patil and K.F. Nariman. The Bombay Satyagraha Committee criticized the activities of Purushottamdas Thakurdas. Judith Brown draws our attention to 'semi-religious hysteria' of the satyagrahis of Bombay.²⁶² According to Brailsford, Bombay had two governments — British and Congress. Congress ruled Bombay in Gandhiji's name.²⁶³

Mohamed Ali urged Muslims not to participate in the movement as its purpose was to establish Hindu Raj. On 3 June 1930, S.A. Brelvi, leader of Bombay's Nationalist Muslims and editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* presided over a meeting of 10,000 and made a fervent appeal to Muslims to join the movement. Consumers welcomed falling prices in Bombay, but the decline in trade created another problem — unemployment. Women took a prominent part in organizing processions and picketing.

Congress failed to get response from the mill-workers in general. From 18 August 1930, Congress organized a labour week. Most of the workers belonged to the Konkan Deccan. The leaders of Girni Kamgar Union were divided regarding the issue of supporting the Civil Disobedience Movement. Its president, G.L. Khandalkar, favoured co-operation with the Congress. The number of jail-goers in metropolitan Bombay was 4,700.

Haig had no illusions about the strength of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Gujarat. Sykes also noted that in Gujarat it was a mass movement. On the whole, the controlled mass movement followed the Bardoli pattern. The principal centres were Anand, Borsad, and Nadiad talukas in Kheda, Jambusar in Broach, and Bardoli in Surat. The no-revenue payment campaign was successful to a great extent. From Bardoli up to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact only Rs 20,000 out of a revenue quota of Rs 397,000 could be collected. In Bardoli farmers actually thought that 'Gandhi rule' had been established. In Kheda the no-revenue campaign involved 15,000 peasants. The Bombay Govern-

ment's problems in dealing with the situation were complicated by the weakness of the police in Kheda. Both recruiting and discipline there had been substandard. There was mass desertion of villages in the face of police brutality which received publicity even in England. Many Patidars took refuge in Baroda State. According to the official Fortnightly Report, in November 1930 Kheda Patidars camped across the Baroda border. They were in abject misery in the face of wholesale confiscation of land. Hardiman has shown that, by early 1931, some Kheda Patidars had reached the stage of transition from Gandhian non-violence to violence. H.N. Brailsford gives a vivid account of police activity in Gujarat in 1930. But there was no doubt about the strength of the mass movement. The number of jail-goers in Gujarat was 3,549. In many places peasants resisted the arrest of their leaders. A village official in Borsad was murdered by lower-caste Dharalas. By 21 June, 224 village officials resigned in support of the movement. Children's corps were set up in Surat, Broach and Ahmedabad.

In Maharashtra, the main issue in the Civil Disobedience Movement was forest laws. There were massive violations of these throughout Maharashtra. Forest satyagrahas were organized by the Congress. The official reports give at least 20 instances of 'Congress violence' between May and October 1930. The Maharashtra Congress was dominated by Chitpavan Brahmins. The prominent leaders were Moonje, Kelkar, N.V. Gadgil and Keshavrao Jedhe of Pune. Attempts were made to win over the Khats and the untouchable Mahars, though without much success. Dr B.R. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates at the Round Table Conference in 1930.

There was violation of forest laws by 100,000 villagers (forest satyagrahis) at Sangamner in Ahmadnagar District (22 July 1930), 70,000 at Bagalan in Nasik District (5 August) and 32 places in Satara District (28 August). At Chanakpur (Nasik District) there was a serious clash between Koli tribals and police on 20 October 1930. The tribals persisted in stoning the police in the face of firing.²⁶⁴ Forest Satyagraha was popular among the Kolis of the Western Ghats who adopted violent methods.

The Sholapur events merit special mention. A textile strike had started in Sholapur on 7 May which developed into a large-scale uprising. The chief force behind the rising were the mill-hands who were supported by Congress volunteers. On 8 May, 25 persons were killed as a result of police firing. Street battles followed, and this continued for several days. The insurgents burnt liquor shops and attacked the municipal building and the railway station (where British officials had taken refuge). Sholapur up to 16 May (when the leaders were arrested) was practically in the hands of revolutionary councils. The *New York Times* highlighted the mob-violence. The *Times* (12 May 1930) remarked that the Sholapur

incident furnished fresh evidence of the hopeless hypocrisy of the non-violent creed of Mahatma Gandhi. The brutality of the police, particularly the merciless flogging of workers, also received publicity in the USA where Taraknath Das asked American friends of the British Labour Party whether they approved of the British reign of terror.²⁶⁵

In the South Zone, the most outstanding leader of the Civil Disobedience Movement was C. Rajagopalachari. His headquarters were at Trichengodu in Salem District, which had been established in 1925. Rajagopalachari made a spectacular Salt March from Trichinapally to Vedaranniyam on the Tanjore coast in April 1930. His salt satyagraha was followed by widespread boycott and picketing of foreign cloth shops. As the caste feeling was quite strong in Tamilnadu, Rajagopalachari launched a controlled mass movement, avoiding the areas inhabited by the low-caste, poor peasants and labourer Kallars. Under his leadership, the movement was strictly non-violent. The anti-liquor movement gained momentum in Coimbatore, Madurai, and Virudhanagar.

Arnold refers to the violent eruptions and the violent repressive methods of the police.²⁶⁶ There was a large-scale clash between the satyagrahis and the police on Madras beach in the Choolai Mill strike. In North Arcot, unemployed weavers attacked police pickets and liquor shops at Gudiyattam. There was a peasant uprising at Bodinayakanur in Madurai. There distress was heightened by falling prices.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Madurai town was supported by merchants and weavers of the Saurashtra community. According to Baker, the real motive of the struggle was to capture municipality of Madurai town.²⁶⁷ In Madurai, the Saurashtra Oolay Sangam held temperance meetings. Toddy and liquor shops sales dropped markedly. The number of jail-goers in Tamilnad was 2,991.

Judith Brown is, however, of the opinion that there was virtually no Civil Disobedience Movement in Tamilnad, even in Madras city;²⁶⁸ and that the boycott movement too completely failed there.²⁶⁹ It is true that the arrest of leaders like T. Prakasam and N. Rao and swift police action had a definite impact on the movement in Madras Province. Barun De²⁷⁰ tells in this context that in Madras we hear for the first time of a practice later to become common all over India. The picketers were put in a lorry and taken a long distance out of the city and left there to find their way without any money.

In Andhra, the Civil Disobedience Movement won the support of locally predominant landed groups.²⁷¹ The movement was intense in areas where resettlement legislation had been most successful. There were well-organized land-revenue agitations and peasant movements in

Andhra. The no-revenue movement in a Nellore village attracted special notice. Judith Brown holds that in the Telugu delta area, people had lost interest in the Civil Disobedience Movement,²⁷² that there was little public sympathy for the movement, and that the delta district leaders found in the Civil Disobedience Movement a means of integrating a local campaign against an increased revenue assessment into an all-India movement.²⁷³

The Congress had a strong base in coastal Andhra, as merchants contributed readily to Congress funds. The cultivators resented the withholding of irrigation water by the government to 1,420 acres in West Godavari. Kamma and Raju cultivators defied such repressive measures. The number of jail-goers in Andhra was 2,878.

Forest satyagraha was a notable feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Karnataka. The Karnataka Satyagraha Mandal even specified the kind of trees that were to be cut down. The no-revenue movement caught on in some districts of Karnataka. Volunteers from Mysore State joined the movement. Ankola, Sirsi and Siddapur talukas of North Kanara were storm centres of the movement. In Ankola and Siddapur, 330 families of the satyagrahis (consisting of 2,000 people) had their property attached, houses forfeited and lands confiscated by the government. Those satyagrahis were poor and their assets were extremely limited. In Siddapur, 37 women satyagrahis fasted, not as a protest against the repressive measures of an alien government, but at the doors of those 'freedom fighters' who had bought their property!

7. Denouement

The day after the historic Dandi march, Irwin wrote to Wedgewood Benn: 'Most of my thought at the moment is concentrated upon Gandhi. I wish I could feel sure what the right way to deal with him [is].' Irwin did find 'the right way' and throughout 1930 he pursued the ever-recurring dual policy which broke the backbone of the struggle for purna swaraj in the 1930s. In the same breath, Irwin was blowing hot concerning the necessity for ordinances and cold in appreciation of Indian nationalism.²⁷⁴ He initiated a two-pronged policy of conciliation to reassure Indian opinion of the sincerity of British intentions, combined with firm action against the Civil Disobedience Movement. Irwin told Sykes on 17 June 1930 that the government ought to hit the Congress hard and also encourage peace moves.²⁷⁵ A typical move of the viceroy was that made on 17 January 1931. After convincing the country about the futility of prolonging Civil Disobedience against all the batteries of repression, Irwin prepared the ground for rapprochement with a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi in the Legislative Assembly: 'However mistaken any man may think him to be, however, deplorable may appear the results of the

policy associated with his name, no one can fail to recognise the spiritual force which compels Mr Gandhi to count no sacrifice too great in the cause, as he believes, of the India he loves.²⁷⁶

On 26 January 1931, Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee were released. The Gandhi who came out of 'Yeravada Mandir' (Gandhiji described Yeravada Gaol as Yeravada Mandir) was different from the Gandhi of the Salt March. Speaking at Bombay after his release he told the audience: 'I am hankering after peace, if it can be had with honour.'²⁷⁷ Before the Gandhi-Irwin talks (which began on 17 February 1931), Gandhiji told V.S. Srinivasa Sastri: 'I wish to be conquered.' When Gandhiji returned late in the night (it was about 2 a.m.) with the news of an agreement with Irwin on 5 March 1931, in Delhi, Jawaharlal was disturbed. As he believed in the continuance of the struggle for purna swaraj, it was indeed a heart-breaking agreement. In the Delhi Pact, even Gandhiji's Eleven Points remained unfulfilled. Jawaharlal was all for a fight, but he realized that neither the country nor Gandhiji was immediately ready for it.²⁷⁸ From his point of view, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was not a truce — it was the end of another phase of the struggle for purna swaraj. The Second Round Table Conference, the resumption or token revival of Civil Disobedience by the Congress, the Individual Satyagraha Movement, Gandhiji's Harijan Movement, and the constitution of 1935 — the sequence of events which followed the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1 baffled Jawaharlal, and drove him to despair. To him these were all side issues that had little to do with the struggle for purna swaraj. Jawaharlal felt that with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact a major battle of the struggle for purna swaraj was over. He had never been happy with Gandhiji's philosophy of adjustment. In the struggle for purna swaraj, any compromise with British imperialism was inconceivable from his point of view. Jawaharlal accepted Gandhiji's philosophy of adjustment only as a matter of discipline, not out of conviction. He was opposed to the acceptance of any basis for discussion with the British Government, save complete independence. Jawaharlal was evidently much disturbed as Gandhiji had set his heart on a settlement. He felt 'great emptiness as if something precious had gone, almost beyond recall'.²⁷⁹

Commenting on the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in the context of the struggle for purna swaraj, Jawaharlal writes in his *Autobiography*: 'Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this?'²⁸⁰ Jawaharlal had no faith in the 'change of heart' theory of Gandhiji. But what to do with the Mahatma? Jawaharlal questioned himself: 'Even if we disagreed with him, what could we do? Throw him over? Break from him? Announce our disagreement? That might bring some personal satisfaction to an individual, but it made no

difference to the final decision.'²⁸¹ According to Gandhiji, Jawaharlal even wept on the Mahatma's shoulder at what he saw as the betrayal of India.²⁸²

Judith Brown asserts that the immediate object of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Gandhiji's eyes was to create a situation in which Congressmen could go to the conference table as the accredited national representatives with a strong negotiating hand.²⁸³ This attempt to explain Gandhiji's involvement in the struggle for purna swaraj seems singularly incomplete. The alarming signals of events from the autumn of 1930 called for compromise, but the initiative for compromise was not in his hands while he was a prisoner. In this context, it is important to remember what Gandhiji told George Slocombe on 20 May 1930, that his life had been nothing but a record of settlements.²⁸⁴ After the Delhi Pact (Gandhi-Irwin Pact), Gandhiji assured him that the settlement was only provisional. It was a truce. The Congress goal remained purna swaraj. Though the Congress had not secured victor's terms, the settlement was consistent with the Lahore Resolution of purna swaraj.²⁸⁵ But it was clear to Jawaharlal, as it was to Gandhiji himself, that the Congress gave up the demand for purna swaraj in the Delhi Pact.

Gandhiji's approach to the struggle became evident at the Karachi session. He said: 'But the truce was made not because we were tired but because it was imperative. He who will fight on, because he can fight is no Satyagrahi but a conceited person guilty before God.'²⁸⁶

Judith Brown rightly points out that, as a satyagrahi, Gandhiji was superbly flexible and could switch from being a battle tactician to an architect of peace.²⁸⁷ Earlier, in his dialogue with Jawaharlal after the Delhi Pact, Gandhiji made it abundantly clear that in the struggle for purna swaraj in 1930, Congress had not been fighting for outright victory. It appears that Gandhiji's real motive in the struggle was 'mass awakening', through the great power of non-violence. It is true that in the mass upsurges, Gandhian restraints on violence had broken down at many places. But he was satisfied with the miraculous mass awakening India achieved in the Civil Disobedience Movement. As Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya said: 'The whole country was ablaze from end to end.'²⁸⁸ So, from Gandhiji's point of view, the Delhi Pact was not a shattering anticlimax. Nevertheless, it disappointed many, including some of his staunchest supporters. According to Hardiman, the Patidars of Kheda considered the Pact a betrayal. 'The Pact, rather than police lathis, broke the morale of the Patidars.'²⁸⁹ Sumit Sarkar observes that the Congress missed the psychological moment for an all-out no revenue and no-rent movement, when it spiked its guns during the 1931 truce. For both UP and coastal Andhra, 1931 was probably 'the psychological moment in the face of the first blast of the depression'.²⁹⁰

The Karachi Session (held toward the end of March 1931) clearly demonstrated that a major battle in the struggle for purna swaraj was over. The principal resolution of the Karachi Congress dealt with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. It reiterated the goal of purna swaraj, as a sop to the dissidents. But a compromise with the new situation was made when Purna Swaraj was interpreted to mean 'control over the defence forces, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy', as well as the right to secede from the empire and an impartial scrutiny of all British financial claims on India, i.e. a reaffirmation of the original demands at Lahore in 1929. The resolution further added that the Congress delegation to the Round Table Conference will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India. 'Gandhiji, as the sole Congress representative to the London Conference was given *carte blanche* to interpret this.'²⁹¹ Yusuf Meherally spoke strongly against the crucial role played by business pressure in Gandhiji's call for compromise. He bitterly attacked Birla, Thakurdas, Walchand and Husainbhai Lalji for making efforts to enjoy the fruits of sacrifices of unknown freedom fighters. All hopes had been shattered, he said, by the stern and paralysing truce.²⁹² He predicted that the Round Table Conference was bound to fail and Gandhiji would again have to give the call for struggle.

Gandhiji's extempore first speech at the Second Round Table Conference was a brilliant exposition of the Congress stand. He said that the Congress was the oldest and the most representative political organization in India representing a large number of Muslims. On behalf of the Congress, Gandhiji pleaded not for purna swaraj but for an honourable and equal partnership between Britain and India, held not by force but by the silken cord of love. On the way to St James Palace for the conference, Gandhiji told Birla (who had suggested that he prepare his first speech): 'God will help me in collecting my thoughts at the proper time. After all we have to talk like simple men. I have no desire to look extra intelligent. Like a simple villager, all that I have to say is 'we want independence'.²⁹³

Like a simple villager, an obviously outmanoeuvred Gandhiji returned from the Round Table Conference only to find Jawaharlal and Badshah Khan in jail, and a battery of repressive measures unleashed by Lord Willingdon (who had made up his mind not to follow Irwinism) to greet him and the Congress leaders. Willingdon also turned down Gandhiji's request for an interview. This left Gandhiji and the Working Committee with no option but to make a token revival of Civil Disobedience Movement. In his moving speech at the Karachi Congress, Yusuf Meherally said: 'Once more the Congress will have to give the clarion call to the fighters to restart the struggle, so let it be. We patiently await the

call to fight.²⁹⁴ That clarion call was given by Gandhiji, not for the resumption of the Civil Disobedience Movement or individual satyagraha, but in the Quit India Movement of 1942.

It is important to understand the alarming signals which prompted Gandhiji to 'hanker for peace'. The Indian League Delegation Report listed the duties of the Civil Resisters like leading processions; holding public meetings; picketing and boycotting of British goods, banks, insurance companies, mints and bullion exchanges; issuing unauthorized bulletins and leaflets; saluting the national flag in public and hoisting it over public buildings like civil and criminal courts; withholding of land revenue and *chaukidar* tax; manufacturing salt; attempting to reoccupy Congress offices taken possession of by the government; violating restraint orders and refusing to be on police parole; celebration of the National week; making no physical resistance even when mercilessly beaten; taking no part in judicial trials or defending themselves against false accusations. Many civil resisters with ambiguous motives fell short of the ethical standard set by Gandhiji. The Mahatma denounced the element of secrecy which had crept into the ranks.²⁹⁵

Till towards the end of April 1930, the official attitude was fairly moderate. But officials like Sykes were in favour of giving a knock-out blow to the Civil Disobedience Movement and they suggested that the satyagrahis should be stripped of all civil rights and should be regarded as outlaws. Sir William Birdwood and his successor as Commander-in-Chief, Sir Philip Chetwode, suggested the use of tear-gas to deal with the 'unruly mob' (satyagrahis). Usually lathi charges were preferred. In the Dharsana raid led by Sarojini Naidu and the aged Imam Sahib, the rank and file were beaten up. Wrote Webb Miller: 'In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. Unresisting men were methodically bashed into a bloody pulp.' Thakurdas also quotes many instances of beating of women and little children by the police. Police chiefs who assembled at New Delhi decided that they could not be chivalrous to women satyagrahis. The promulgation of ordinances (The Prevention of Intimidation Ordinance, Unlawful Instigation Ordinance, the Press Ordinance, Unauthorized News-sheets, Newspapers Ordinance, Unlawful Association Ordinance, The Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance) was followed by a vigorous campaign of arrests. All established leaders were put under arrest by early May 1930. The British public remained in the dark about the repressive measures of the Government thanks to the voluntary censorship of the British press. Congress organizations and Youth Leagues were outlawed and the government were authorized to confiscate their property.

Miss Madeline Slade, a disciple of Gandhiji, published her detailed report on the police atrocities on the satyagrahis in the *Young India* of 12 June 1930. Ruthless policies adopted by the police included lathi blows and thrusts in private parts, stripping of men naked before beating them, thrusting sticks into the anus, squeezing the testicles, dragging wounded men and throwing them into hedges or into water, riding of horses over men, thrusting of pins and thorns into bodies, using foul language and blasphemy and beating of men after they became unconscious. Orders to fire on the Satyagrahis were also issued. According to an official report (14 July 1930), there were 24 cases of firing as a result of which 103 died. More than four hundred were wounded, of whom 8 died subsequently. Winston Churchill justified the repressive measures and carried on a crusade against the Civil Disobedience Movement. He made his views abundantly clear: 'We ought to make it perfectly clear that we intend to remain rulers of India for a very long and indefinite period and though we welcome co-operation from loyal Indians, we will have no truck with lawlessness and treason.'

From the autumn of 1930 onwards, different forms of mass upsurges made the second wave of the Civil Disobedience Movement less manageable. Furthermore, peasant groups were losing their potency and there was a decline in enthusiasm and support from mill-owners and urban merchants. Gandhiji was also aware of the fact that the Muslim League had openly opposed the movement. The Liberals also kept away from the movement. Throughout 1930 Sapru, Jayakar, Sethna and Sastri had been pressing through Motilal for a settlement and such developments created a favourable opportunity for compromises. On 19 January 1931, MacDonald declared that the British Government would be prepared to recognize the principle of the responsibility of the executive to the legislature, though with a series of reservations and safeguards. The statement had a profound effect on the Liberals who genuinely believed that the only way for their country to achieve freedom from British control in peaceful fashion was to proceed gradually, step by step. They saw Gandhiji as the key to their hopes and through Motilal Nehru they made determined efforts to woo him to lead the Congress into co-operation.

Above all there was the 'business pressure'. Sumit Sarkar²⁹⁶ has shown the crucial role played by Gandhiji's capitalist friends in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Thakurdas warned Motilal through Lalji Naranji that the capacity of the commercial community for enduring losses was reaching its limits. Devi Prasad Khaitan, a close associate of Birla, was also of the same opinion. The piecegoods importers and dealers of Delhi, Amritsar and Kanpur, particularly, had differed in picketing. D.G. Dalvi wrote to Tej Bahadur Sapru on 17 November 1931 that the

Civil Disobedience Movement had alienated businessmen who had previously favoured the Congress.

In early February 1931, a surcharge of 5 per cent had been imposed on cotton piecegoods imports. Some cabinet members opposed the move. There were loud protests from Lancashire, the government did not levy any additional charge on non-British imports. Imperial preference was avoided for the time being on political grounds. The Bombay Governor reported to Irwin on 7 February 1931 that a number of capitalist friends of Gandhiji were thinking of breaking with him unless he adopted a 'reasonable attitude'. It is significant that Irwin informed Wedgewood Benn on 11 February that Purushottamdas would probably go to see Gandhi at Allahabad in order to try to put 'commercial pressure on him'. Gandhiji's agonizing dilemma was to fashion a policy which would suit his different clients. We should not forget that Motilal had died. Subhas Chandra Bose was languishing in the Alipore Jail. Most of the members of the Congress Working Committee were anxious for a settlement. Gandhiji could not compose the local disputes of the Congress factions and conciliate the Muslim majority provinces. Maulana Shaukat Ali provoked Hindu-Muslim tensions. Tory terrorism considerably broke the spirit of the movement. The police terrorized the villagers, smashing houses, damaging crops, inflicting punishment for trivial offences, and blockading the villages. Lt Colonel Arthur Ciston in his book, *Must England Lose England*, quoted an official about the activities of the punitive police: 'Within twenty-four hours there will not be a virgin or a four anna piece left in that village.' On 11 February, D.P. Khaitan in his presidential address to the Calcutta Indian Chamber of Commerce observed that 'It may not be amiss to suggest to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that the time has come when they should explore the possibilities of an honourable settlement. We all want peace.' It was Thakurdas who helped in resolving the final hitch over Gujarat land confiscation in the Gandhi-Irwin talks. It is also significant that Gandhiji attended the Congress of Cloth Merchants of Bombay on 24 June 1931. Birla was obviously happy with Gandhiji's response. On 21 December 1932 Birla wrote to Gandhiji: 'We are so much dazzled with your super-human personality that we have almost lost self-confidence in ourselves.'²⁹⁷

B.G. Horniman described Irwin as an agile opportunist. Gandhiji believed in Irwin's sincerity and appreciated his peace-making efforts. The Gandhi-Irwin parleys began on the afternoon of 17 February 1931. They spread over eight meetings and lasted for a total of 24 hours. Sarojini Naidu described the two negotiators as the 'two Mahatmas'. An agreement was finally reached on the morning of 4 March 1931. Under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact it had been arranged that (1) civil disobedience

should be effectively discontinued, (2) the Congress would participate in the Round Table Conference, (3) the essential elements of the scheme of constitutional reform were to be federation, Indian responsibility and reservation or safeguards for such matters as defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations. The safeguards gave Jawaharlal a tremendous shock. He quoted in his *Autobiography*: 'This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a whimper.' Gandhiji in the Delhi Pact got token concessions regarding salt and swadeshi propaganda, but he gave up his demands for inquiry into police atrocities and return of confiscated lands already sold to third parties. It was also felt that Gandhiji did not press hard enough to save the lives of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru (they were executed on 23 March). Subhas Chandra Bose had suggested to Gandhiji to break with Irwin on this question.

In the Gandhi-Irwin talks Gandhiji pleaded for the withdrawal of ordinances, the end of the government salt monopoly and payment of reparation to those whose lands had been confiscated. Gandhiji failed to obtain these concessions. Irwin agreed to lower the land tax slightly but only in some areas. Gandhiji admitted that the Congress had not secured a victor's terms, but neither had the government. Gandhiji's critics wondered if there was anything in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which could not have been obtained from the British Government in 1929. Gandhiji, however, took the pact as the beginning of a new chapter. Alan Campbell Johnson maintained that Gandhiji's gains were 'consolation prizes' and Irwin's only surrender was in agreeing to enter into negotiations. Sumit Sarkar points out the psychological significance of the pact in which the viceroy had to treat Mahatma Gandhi on an entirely novel basis of courtesy and equality.²⁹⁸

The so-called 'truce' was to be ratified by the Congress at the Karachi Session in March 1931. While addressing a mammoth meeting in Karachi on 25 March, Gandhiji said: 'Gandhi may die, but Gandhism will live for ever.' Two days after, in the Naujawan Sabha Conference, Subhas Chandra Bose referred to Bhagat Singh's execution and asked of what use the truce terms were if the lives of such heroes could not be saved.

The Karachi Congress, under the presidentship of Vallabhbhai Patel, met in the open air. Gandhiji was greeted with black flags and presented black flowers in token of sorrow at Bhagat Singh's execution. Tendulkar tells us that in the early hours of 23 March Gandhiji wrote a letter appealing to the charity of Irwin and he pleaded in vain. When Jawaharlal said: 'The corpse of Bhagat Singh shall stand between us and England,' Gandhiji retorted, 'We must not put ourselves in the wrong by being angry. Let us recognise that commutation of the sentence was

no part of the truce.'²⁹⁹ Seven members of Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha forced their way into the Congress camp and to Gandhiji's quarters at Karachi shouting: 'Where is bloody Gandhi?' Jawaharlal saved Gandhiji from physical attack. But Dr Mahmud criticized Jawaharlal for not leading the radical elements of the Congress in Karachi against the compromising leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Ironically, Jawaharlal was persuaded by Gandhiji to move the principal resolution of the Karachi session which dealt with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Round Table Conference. This was an astute tactical manoeuvre and, as Judith Brown remarks, the Karachi Congress was a signal triumph for Gandhiji. Jawaharlal also moved a resolution which condemned Bhagat Singh's execution and praised his courage and patriotism, though it maintained the disapproval of the Congress of political violence. The Karachi Congress also authorized Gandhiji to represent it at the Round Table Conference along with other delegates as the Working Committee might appoint.

Jawaharlal's resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy laid down a programme of social, political and labour reforms to end the exploitation of the masses. Some believed that it was M.N. Roy who played the decisive role in drafting it. Jawaharlal writes in his autobiography that M.N. Roy had absolutely nothing to do with it.³⁰⁰ The programme reflected socialistic ideals and its object was to infuse a new outlook in Congress policy. It included freedom of expression, religion, thought and assembly; equality before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex; protection to regional languages and cultures; for the industrial labourers and workers, living wages, limited hours of work, old age insurance; a decent standard of living for the people; safeguards against unemployment; the abolition of untouchability; the right to form unions; reduction of rent and land revenue; a system of graduated inheritance taxes and progressive income taxes; free compulsory education; universal adult franchise; total prohibition, state control and management of large industries, services and public undertakings; severe limitations on salaries of civil servants; and the establishment of a secular state.

Jawaharlal's Karachi resolution was one of his major contributions to India's struggle for freedom. It broadened the Congress objectives beyond the political goal of complete self-government. He regarded the resolution as a very short step in a socialist direction.³⁰¹ It implied the acceptance of the tenets of a radical democracy by the Congress. It was the first official Congress pledge in favour of socialism. Barun De remarks that 'The nationalist leadership now had to move under the banner of best democratic principles for the rest of the period in the freedom struggle.'³⁰² For Jawaharlal, this resolution was a personal

triumph. Subhas Chandra Bose, however, regarded the Karachi session as the pinnacle of the Mahatma's popularity and prestige.

Lord Irwin was succeeded as viceroy by Lord Willingdon on 17 April 1931. Willingdon regarded Irwinism as the quintessence of weakness. He was determined to crush the challenge of the Congress. According to Lord Burnham, he decided not to permit the 'half naked seditious faqir to darken the door of the viceregal palace' for negotiating on terms of equality. As the officials resumed the repressive measures, Gandhiji complained of the violation of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He requested the Government of India to appoint Boards of Inquiry in different provinces, each consisting of a Congress nominee and a representative of the government. Gandhiji's suggestion was turned down. Irwin had assured Gandhiji that the government would nominate Dr Ansari as a delegate to the Round Table Conference, but Willingdon refused to do so on the grounds that other Muslim delegates were opposed to his nomination.

Gandhiji decided not to attend the Round Table Conference. He was angry about the coercive measures adopted by the government in collection of land revenue in some of the villages of the Surat District. Willingdon's stiff attitude created an atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty. Gandhiji wired to Willingdon requesting an interview. He met him at Simla on 25 August 1931, along with Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai Patel and Prabhashankar Pattani. The crisis was avoided, and Gandhiji sailed from Bombay on 29 August. He was accompanied by Madan Mohan Malaviya who wanted to bring a cow into the entourage for ritually pure milk. He reached London on 12 September to attend the conference. On 16 August Ramsay MacDonald's Labour cabinet resigned. The Labour Government was succeeded by a National Government dominated by the Conservative Party. Ramsay MacDonald continued as Prime Minister. Samuel Hoare, the new Secretary of State for India was a Tory diehard. The Round Table Conference under Hoare was no more than a pompous debating society. *The Truth* heralded Gandhiji's arrival in England with the appellation 'humbug'. From 14 September Gandhiji began to attend the meetings of the conference. Gandhiji complained of the long and slow agony of its sessions. Ivor Jennings observed: 'What happened in 1931 is one of the parlour games of the Faculties of Economics and Politics.'³⁰³

In the Second Round Table Conference the structure of the federal judiciary was completed; the financial relations between the Centre and the provinces were examined; the mode of a state's accession to federation was settled, and the composition of the federal legislature. But what did Gandhiji achieve in the conference? He had been 'persuasive, pleading, arguing, never declamatory' but he felt he was wasting time there.

To the British public, the financial crisis was more important than the problems of the Indian National Congress and the Indian Constitution. The *Daily Mail* declared that India was Britain's greatest imperial asset. Without India the Commonwealth would fall to pieces. Hoare frankly told Gandhiji that, in his opinion, Indians were unfit for complete self-government. Gandhiji found the Muslim delegates sullen and aggressive. He complained to MacDonald that the Conference was futile as the other delegates were government nominees. He made a fervent plea that the British should trust the Congress as a representative of all Indians. Gandhiji claimed that the Congress was a national and not merely a party organization.

Gandhiji was a member of the Committee on Federal Structure and Minorities. In the conference, he demanded that responsible government be established in full and immediately, including complete control over external affairs, finance, army and defence, without any safeguards. He demanded full Responsible government both at the centre and in the provinces. The governor-general should not be vested with special powers. Gandhiji asserted that India must be given freedom to secede from the British Commonwealth. Gandhiji's claims, demands and speeches did not influence the decisions of the Second Round Table Conference.

On the communal question there was a deadlock. The Muslim delegates were adamant in their attitude that a settlement of the communal problem must be reached before other matters were considered. There was unending discussion on the communal problem. Gandhiji tabled a scheme based on the Nehru Report, but it was not accepted. During the Round Table Conference, Dr B.R. Ambedkar had proposed to Gandhiji an agreement whereby a certain number of seats would be reserved for the Depressed Classes in the legislature on the basis of a common electorate for all sections of the Hindus. The proposal was not acceptable to Gandhiji. Ambedkar then joined the other minorities in opposing Gandhiji. It is significant that Gandhiji later accepted a similar proposal with terms much more favourable to the Depressed Classes.³⁰⁴ The representatives of the minorities (the Muslims, Anglo-Indians, a section of the Indian Christians, the European commercial community, the Depressed Classes) intimated the chairman, Ramsay MacDonald, that they had reached an agreement *inter se*. The Minorities Committee met on 13 November 1931. MacDonald was of the view that the Minorities Pact was acceptable to over 115 million people. Gandhiji emphatically repudiated the statement and claimed that the Congress as a national organization represented 85 per cent of the population of the whole of India. He pointed out that the composition of the Indian Delegation was largely responsible for the communal impasse. Gandhiji stated that the

minority question should not take precedence over other important issues before the conference. He suggested that the fundamental question of framing a constitution for India should be taken up first. If all efforts for a solution of the communal problem failed, there might be a provision in the constitution that the question should be referred to a judicial tribunal for a final decision.³⁰⁵

Ramsay MacDonald in the course of discussions remarked that the communal impasse was hampering the progress of constitution making. It was suggested that the British Government should settle the dispute, and the suggestion was accepted with important reservations. Obviously there was little prospect of any such effort securing harmony in working. Gandhiji was prepared to accept the arbitration by the Prime Minister, provided it concerned the Muslims and the Sikhs. He made it clear that he would not be a party to the separate representation of other communities. Ramsay MacDonald addressed a plain question to all the members of the committee: Were they prepared to sign a request to him to settle the 'community question'? Most of the members signed such a request. When he announced his decision in June 1932, it was not clear whether it was an award binding on all or merely a proposal. The Minorities Sub-Committee failed to come to an agreed settlement.

The Second Round Table Conference closed on 1 December 1931. On that day Ramsay MacDonald announced that the North-West Frontier should be constituted a governor's province and that Sindh should be constituted a separate province (if satisfactory means of financing it could be found). He made it plain that the methods of conferences and committees would be continued to discuss the basis for a constitution.

R.C. Majumdar³⁰⁶ criticizes Gandhiji's conduct in the conference, particularly his Christian meekness and humility and piteous appeals in such words as: 'For heaven's sake give me, a frail man of sixty-two, a little bit of chance for him and the organisation he represents.' He asserts that Gandhiji failed to achieve any success in the conference; that the Congress should not have refused to attend the First Round Table Conference; that the tactics of Gandhiji were responsible for the failure of the Second Round Table Conference to a large extent. A saint like Gandhiji had no place in a meeting of diehard politicians. This seems to be an over-simplification of a very complex problem. When we think of the official attitude (Irwin and the Labour Party in power) towards the Civil Disobedience Movement revealed in double-pronged policy, police atrocities, ordinances and 'knock out blows', peace talks and the execution of Bhagat Singh, it becomes difficult to accept Majumdar's contention that, with Irwin as Viceroy and the Labour Party in power there was a far greater chance of gaining substantial reforms in the first conference than in the second. Gandhi's performance at the Round Table Confer-

ence must be assessed against the background of the overall situation — a shift to the right in British politics, the British business counter-offensive, signs of a return towards 'Simonism', the concerted move of British business delegates (like Benthall) to cultivate the Muslim delegates,³⁰⁷ and the behind-the-scenes alignments.

Did Gandhiji expect much when he attended the Round Table Conference? It is significant that he said on the eve of his departure to London, 'When I think of the prospects in London, when I know all is not well in India, there is nothing wanting to fill me with utter despair. The horizon is as black as it possibly could be. There is every chance of my returning empty-handed.'³⁰⁸ Subhas Chandra Bose noted lack of planning behind Gandhiji's visit. Gandhiji should have gone to the Conference table in 1930 if he intended to co-operate. Subhas Chandra thought that Gandhiji absent in 1930 was more influential than Gandhiji present in 1931.³⁰⁹ He criticized Gandhiji for not spending time in America contacting important politicians and at the League of Nations; also for meeting unimportant people in England.

The criticism by Subhas Chandra and Judith Brown ignores the overall situation in which Gandhiji participated in the Round Table Conference. Judith Brown finds 'some truth' in Bose's criticism. She says that Gandhiji proved a skilful negotiator within the Congress, but he failed as an all-India leader at the Round Table Conference. His weakness lay on his political style.³¹⁰ The *New York Times* (20 November 1931) tried to show that events at the Second Round Table Conference made it clear that Gandhiji did not have a united India behind him. This was what Ramsay MacDonald, 'the slippery Labourite', Simon, the subtle liberal, and the die-hard Conservatives like Winston Churchill wanted to show before all the world. The circular issued by the representatives of the European community in India who attended the Second Round Table Conference reveals the inside story. The following passage is revealing: 'The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us.'³¹¹ The representatives of the European community at the Round Table Conference gloated over the fact that Gandhiji undertook to settle the communal problem and failed to do so before all the world.

But was Gandhiji alone responsible for this failure? It is true that Gandhiji told Birla that he would like to talk like a simple man, a simple villager, in the conference. But he spoke brilliantly. As Zacharias observed, 'the English looker saw [on the one hand] the figure of a prophet proclaiming lofty ideals and on the other a crowd of cynical self-seekers'.³¹² As a Congress delegate, Gandhiji claimed to speak for all Indians. As a fighter for purna swaraj, his comment on the communal problem at the Round Table Conference was: 'I have not a shadow of

doubt that the iceberg of communal differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom.' As a statesman, Gandhiji was prepared to give a blank cheque to Jinnah and the Muslim leaders. On 5 October, he offered to accept all Muslim claims provided they supported the Congress demand for swaraj. The Muslim delegates bluntly rejected the offer. On the questions of federation and communal differences, the princes, and the delegates of the Hindu Mahasabha and the representatives of the Sikh community were speaking in different voices. The Minorities Pact without the support of the Congress was obviously still-born. But when Ramsay MacDonald in this context said that the pact covered 115 million people or about 46 per cent of India's population, Gandhiji remarked: 'You had a striking demonstration of the accuracy of this figure. You have had on behalf of the women of India a complete repudiation of special representation. As they happen to be one half of the population of India, this forty-six per cent is somewhat reduced.'

The *Manchester Guardian* blamed Ramsay MacDonald for not giving a strong lead in the Round Table Conference. Gandhiji knew that his participation was singularly futile. Sastri who thought that Gandhiji was himself a problem in the conference, said that the mahatma was looking for a decent excuse to pull out of it. Judith Brown remarks that Gandhiji's failure to break the communal deadlock showed the inherent weakness of his political position and that his manner of political bargaining was tactless and inept.³¹³ She does not attach adequate importance to the behind-the-scenes concerted moves and alignments which frustrated the efforts of a lone fighter. Judith Brown herself quotes Hoare who reported that Gandhiji's handling of the minorities problem thoroughly mystified everybody.³¹⁴ Alone, Gandhiji should not be singled out for the RTC's failure to solve the communal problem. As Harold Laski, in letters to Justice Holmes of the USA, pointed out, the communal settlement was not possible under Tory imperialism. He felt that, if Ramsay MacDonald had been strongminded, he could have compelled agreement. Laski referred to 'the damned Tory Secretary of State' (Hoare) who 'gets on his hind legs and develops a prestige complex'.³¹⁵

It is true that Gandhiji returned from the conference with empty hands — without swarajya in the hollow of his hands. When he had left India, he knew that he had lost a major battle in the struggle for purna swaraj, but the war was not yet over. On the eve of his departure to London, 'when the horizon was dark before him', Gandhiji said: 'But believing as I do that God has made the way to London clear for me through the second settlement, I approach the visit with hope.' That hope was not of getting the substance of independence, but finding out the measure of the strength of freedom-fighters in the struggle for purna

swaraj. As Gandhiji observed in a press interview on 3 December 1931: 'I never believed that we would get anything more than what our internal strength entitled. The RTC negotiations have been a method of finding out the measure of our strength compared with those with whom power at present resides. We have evidently failed. The Congress, therefore, must refill the battery so that it will be powerful enough to do its work.'³¹⁶ From that point of view his visit to London had not been fruitless.

On the way to England, Gandhiji received messages of good wishes from Madame Zaghlul Pasha, Nahas Pasha and the leaders of the Wafd Party. These were symbolic of the recognition of India's struggle for purna swaraj. In fact, purna swaraj was never out of his mind. It is also significant that, the day after Gandhiji reached London, he broadcast to America calling for worldwide co-operation with India in her mighty struggle for liberty. He said that India wanted to achieve a successful bloodless revolution. He did try to mould British public opinion also in favour of the Congress. In his speech on 20 October at Chatham House, Gandhiji asserted that the Congress wanted nothing short of complete political independence and, therefore, complete control over the army, foreign relations and finance. Gandhiji's activities in Britain outside the conference milieu included his meeting with the King Emperor, visits to Eton, Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester Universities, contact with the employers and employees of the Lancashire cotton industry and Labour members of parliament. His purpose was to understand the mood of the government and the people. Gandhiji met Bernard Shaw, Members of Parliament, students and teachers of the London School of Economics, A.D. Lindsay, Gilbert Murray, Reginald Coupland, Edward Thompson, Lloyd George, some bishops and other church dignitaries and Charlie Chaplin. Gandhiji had taste of the new mood when the King Emperor looked at the bare knees of 'the rebel fakir' and warned him in Buckingham Palace: 'Remember, Mr Gandhi, I won't have attacks on my Empire.'³¹⁷ Gandhiji replied: 'I must not be drawn into a political argument in Your Majesty's Palace after receiving Your Majesty's hospitality.' He had another taste of the new mood when Hoare warned Gandhiji in the Round Table Conference that if the Congress would try to force the pace by direct action, the government would crush it with all the force at its command.

Gandhiji returned to Bombay on 28 December 1931 and found Christmas gifts from Willingdon waiting for him — Jawaharlal and Ghaffar Khan in jail. Large-scale repressive measures had been taken by Willingdon to crush the challenge of the Congress activists, though official Congress was reluctant to take up radical programmes in the absence of Gandhiji.

In the face of the blast of the depression, the situation was favourable for no-revenue and no-rent movements in UP and coastal Andhra. In Bengal, in 1931, terrorism had surpassed all previous records. The government had to impose a night curfew on 'Hindu Bhadrak Lok Youth' between 16 and 25 in Chittagong. There were 92 incidents, including 9 murders. (In the murder of Stevens, two schoolgirls, Santi and Suniti Chowdhary, were involved). On 16 September the police indiscriminately fired on detainees at Hijle Jail without justification (the officer concerned went on holiday touring the world after the shooting) and Rabindranath Tagore, who was not a terrorist sympathizer, addressed the protest meeting in Calcutta.

In coastal Andhra, local leaders like Duggirala Balaramkrishnayya tried to organize the peasants of Krishna District and the Venkatagiri estate in Nellore in a no-revenue campaign. Leadership in a forest satyagraha in this region was provided by N.G. Ranga and N.V. Rama Naidu. There was a spate of anti-mahajan riots in the districts of Guntur and Krishna. For some time there was 'mob rule' at Pudhettah.

In November 1931, Congress leader, Kelappan started the Guruvayur temple satyagraha in Kerala, A.K. Gopalan (a school teacher who later became a noted Communist leader) actively participated in the movement.

In UP, Gandhiji and the Congress tried to act as arbitrator between zamindars and tenants. The cultivators were asked to send applications for rent reductions to the local Congress offices. Activists like Kalka Prasad and Anjani Kumar of Rai Bareilly represented agrarian radicalism in UP. Their main centres of activity were Rai Bareilly and Barabanki. They took up the cause of the defaulting tenants against the Raja of Sheogarh who had started a Khadi Vidyalaya. Jawaharlal intervened in this matter, particularly because the wife of Sitala Sahu (the local leader closest to Jawaharlal) was a teacher in the Khadi Vidyalaya. All local leaders and activists were using the name of the Congress. In Gaya, Jadunath Sharma tried to organize a strong kisan movement. In September 1931, Krishak Sanghas were set up in Orissa and Congress activists strained zamindar-tenant relations in districts like Puri.

In the North-West Frontier there was rapid growth of the Khudai Khidmatgar organization of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. In Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah started the National Conference movement which, unfortunately, ended in a communal riot. There were anti-moneylender riots in Mirpur, Kotli and Rajauri talukas of Jammu and Kashmir. Large-scale repressive measures were adopted by Willingdon, which Gandhiji described as attempts to 'unman a whole race'. Gandhiji sent a telegram to the Viceroy with a request to grant him an interview. Willingdon was willing to see him, but was not prepared to discuss the measures which

the Government had undertaken against 'pressures from below'. Willingdon's speech in the Legislative Assembly on 26 January 1932 was indicative of his uncompromising attitude. The official attitude left Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee with no option but to start a token revival of Civil Disobedience Movement, even when Hoare had emphatically declared that there was to be no drawn battle this time. After the mass awakening in the struggle for purna swaraj in 1930, Gandhiji wanted the Congress to take a rest, but he did not want the nation to sleep again.

The Second Civil Disobedience Movement evoked far less support from the masses than the 1930 movement, because the Congress had been bereft by Willingdon of its leaders, resources and organization. It was Bombay Governor, Sir Frederick Sykes' encounter with the Second Civil Disobedience Movement which set the steam-roller rolling. The Bombay Provincial Congress turned itself into a 'War Council', but there was no planned escalation of conflicts. Isolated disturbances had been numerous. There had been much use of hartals, processions, boycott of British goods, salt satyagrahas, non-payment of *chaukidari* taxes, no-rent, no-tax and no-revenue campaigns, forest law violations, illegal Congress functioning like the use of bombs and a secret radio transmitter near Bombay. It was marked by low Muslim participation, less response in the countryside, but more urban picketing and increasing participation of women and illiterates.

Muslim peasants movements during this period developed on separate lines. Congress kept away from agrarian radicalism. The business attitude was rather ambivalent. Businessmen realized that the disorder inevitable in any movement affected production and trade. Birla told Sapru that Gandhiji should abandon the movement as a lost case. Willingdon tried to win over Birla and Thakurdas. Birla indicated to Willingdon and Hoare that the government should give a constitution 'acceptable to the nationalist opinion outside Congress'. He was sure that Gandhiji would give it his blessing. But without the co-operation of Gandhiji, direct or indirect, no constitution stood a chance of success. British officials put a lot of pressure on Thakurdas to secure the support of the Congress. Thakurdas publicly criticized the boycott activities in Bombay.

Thakurdas attended the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa without objections from Birla and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The approval of the Ottawa Pact by the Central Legislative Assembly was a victory for the government and a slap in the face of the Congress. Needless to add, the pact furthered imperial commerce.

The Second Civil Disobedience Movement was strongest in UP, Bombay, Bengal and Bihar, and weakest in the Punjab. The number of jail-goers (about 61,551 in the first nine months of the movement in 1932) was a little higher than that of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-1. The Government's policy was to curb any conspicuous or direct action on the part of the Congress Party. Independence Day on 26 January 1932, was celebrated with great enthusiasm, but it was followed by firing and arrests in places like Bombay, Allahabad, Patna and the North-West Provinces. In the East Zone, in Bengal there were salt satyagrahas in coastal areas, no-rent movements in Arambagh, Tripura, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Jalpaiguri, and Hoogly; non-payment of *chaukidari* taxes and Union Board boycotts in many districts. Maulana Bhasani's Praja Movement was a genuine agrarian movement, though with communalist appeals. The Praja Sammelan at Sirajganj demanded abolition of zamindari and scaling down of debts. There was a fairly effective boycott campaign in Calcutta which provided the largest number of political prisoners. The movement struck rural roots in western districts of Bengal. Jute cultivation had been hard hit by the depression in jute prices. Arambagh and Midnapur were the strongholds of the Congress. Bengal remained a centre of terrorism. Sir Stanley Jackson, who was a specialist in repression was fired at by a girl student (Bina Das) in the Calcutta University Convocation. She was sentenced to 9 years' rigorous imprisonment. More than 3,000 satyagrahis and terrorists were detained at concentration camps at Buxa, Hijli and Deoli. Surya Sen was arrested in 1933 and the Chittagong convicts were sent to the Andamans. For three days, the non-official Europeans looted the houses of Congress leaders and satyagrahis without any police interference. The number of terrorist cases was 104 in 1932, 33 in 1933 and 17 in 1934.

In Bihar there were mob attacks in Champaran, Monghyr and Muzaffarpur districts in February 1932. There was police firing on the crowds. There is evidence of participation by teenagers and hired persons. There was not much mass response in Assam and Orissa. In Assam the movement was limited to a few centres like Sylhet. The educated were indifferent and the Muslim attitude was rather hostile. In Orissa, salt satyagrahas were organized.

It was from UP that the severest pressure on Gandhiji to restart the Civil Disobedience Movement came. Congress leaders, however, did not espouse agrarian radicalism. According to Gyan Pandey, 80 per cent of land revenue due from Rai Bareilly had been collected by July 1932, two months before the due time. Agra District was on the whole quiet though there was a no-rent movement in village Barauda. No-rent movements in a number of districts in UP were reported in a secret AICC Bulletin of March 1932. The Second Civil Disobedience Movement

was strongest in Allahabad District. It was more of an urban phenomenon. It was marked by picketing, a little illicit salt manufacture, cutting of telegraph wires, illegal processions, distribution of leaflets, raids on government buildings and damaging letter boxes.

In the West Zone, the support of the Gujarati business community, particularly small traders, made Bombay, 'the keep of Gandhism', a formidable centre of the movement. Willingdon described Bombay as the 'black spot'. The central Mulji Jetha raw cotton market was adversely affected till October 1932. The government assisted white firms. Rural response in Gujarat was less than in 1930. The government pressurized Baroda to close its borders to peasant agitators. By February 1932, about 15 villages were continuing to withhold revenue in Kheda. Ras village in Kheda had been withholding revenue in utter defiance of punitive measures. Sixteen encampments of armed police pickets encircled the whole cultivated area. Out of a total of 2,600 acres, 500 acres had been confiscated and sold and 900 had been seized and were to be sold. Punitive police were stationed in Ras at the cost of the villagers. Animals and implements of peasants were seized and sold at nominal prices. Some of the refractory Patidars were stripped naked, publicly whipped and given electric shocks by the police. Muslims were hostile to the movement and there were a series of communal riots between May and July 1932. There was no response from mill-workers. It has to be noted that in the Second Civil Disobedience Movement some of the movable property of Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati was attached.

In Central India there were isolated forest satyagrahas. On 1 May 1932, about 4,000 villagers assembled at the taluka headquarters of Ankola carrying freshly cut firewood for auction. In Betul, tribal leaders like Mannu Gond and Chaitu Koiku offered forest satyagraha.

In North Zone, in the Punjab, there was no active Sikh support for the movement, though some pro-Congress Sikhs tried to get the support of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Curiously enough, there were many Punjabi Congressmen who were critical of Jawaharlal and Abdul Ghaffar Khan for resuming a Civil Disobedience Movement for which the country was not ready. The Muslim attitude was hostile. The most outstanding leader of the movement in the Punjab was Dr Kitchlew. In Delhi, Smt Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya held illegal Congress sessions in public near the Chandni Chowk Clock Tower in April 1932. In Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah tried to start an anti-feudal (anti-Maharaja) movement in co-operation with Jammu Hindu leaders like P.N. Bazaz. The Grievances Enquiry Commission gave some concessions in April 1932 which the leaders of the Readers' Party had demanded. But the Maharaja of Kashmir was reluctant to implement the recommendations. The dissatisfied leaders set up a Political Conference of Jammu and

Kashmir which was more democratic and broad-based than the Readers' Party. It decided to start a movement for the curtailment of the maharaja's despotic powers.

In Alwar, there was a formidable anti-feudal (anti-maharaja) movement in early 1933. The revolt of the peasants had economic roots. They were extremely dissatisfied with Maharaja Jai Singh Sawai's exorbitant revenue demand, grazing duties, *begar* system and reservation of forests for hunting. The Meos (a semi-contained semi-tribal peasant community) became aggressive and started guerilla operations on a large scale. About 80-90,000 Meos were involved in the anti-maharaja movement. Muhammad Yasin Khan tried to give the movement a communal colour as the Meos had a formal affinity to Islam. Syed Mutlabi Faridabadi and K.M. Ashraf tried to develop an alternative trend in the movement. Ultimately, Maharaja Jai Singh was packed off to Europe.

In the South, the Civil Disobedience Movement was weaker in Tamil Nadu and Andhra as compared to the movement of 1930. In Tamil Nadu swift repressive action under the ordinances dislocated the movement. Urban picketing, particularly of foreign cloth was the most significant feature of the movement. The main centres were Madras, Virudunagar, Madurai and Ramnad. In the Telugu districts, an anti-land-revenue campaign was conspicuous. There were signs of revival of no-revenue movements in coastal Andhra in 1933. Forest satyagraha was offered in Kasergod Taluka of Malabar in August and October 1932. More than 200 villages withheld revenue in Ankola and Siddapur talukas of north Kanara. A powerful no-tax movement developed in Karnataka.

It was clear by the second half of 1932 that the Second Civil Disobedience Movement was going down in defeat. This was not due to any loss of faith in the Congress. It was a submission to overwhelmingly superior force. Willingdon claimed that the situation was well under control by 4 April 1932. He said, 'Eighteen months ago, things were in a mess, I will guarantee that conditions are today 100 per cent better than they were then, and I go further and guarantee that the people of India are 100 per cent happier.'

In the Second Civil Disobedience Movement the government swung into immediate and strong action by banging an iron door in Gandhiji's face. On 2 January 1932, Subhas Chandra was arrested at Kalyan, near Bombay, and two days later Gandhiji was arrested at Mani Bhawan, Bombay, under Regulation XXV of 1927 and lodged in Yeravada Central Jail. On 4 January, Willingdon promulgated four Ordinances: (1) The Emergency Powers Ordinance which widened the operative scope of the Press Act, (2) the Unlawful Instigation Ordinance aimed at no-tax movements, (3) the Unlawful Association Ordinance, which was directed against Congress buildings and funds, and (4) the Prevention of

Molestation and Boycotting Ordinance which was promulgated to prevent picketing and boycotting of public servants. Under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, Congress and other disapproved organizations were declared unlawful associations. On the very first day, 272 associations were banned in Bengal. Commenting on these ordinances, Jawaharlal wrote: 'It was a declaration of a kind of state of siege for the whole of India, the extent and intensity of application being left to the discretion of the local authorities.'³¹⁸ All top leaders like Jawaharlal, Badshah Khan, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Ansari, Sardar Sardul Singh, T.A.K. Sherwani, Sarojini Naidu, Azad, Rajagopalachari, Satyamurti, Kasturba Gandhi and Maniben Patel were arrested. The Report of the India League Delegation of London (Monica Whately, Ellen Wilkinson, Leonard W. Matters and V.K. Krishna Menon) gives an insight into the repressive measures adopted by Willingdon to crush the movement. The Delegation reached Bombay on 17 August 1932 and left India on 7 November 1932. It went to every province except CP. The report says that the ordinances deprived the people of their basic rights. Throughout British India, martial law conditions prevailed. There was suspension of ordinary law. Blockading of villages, billeting, fines, curfew, special tribunals, firing, mass intimidation, ill-treatment in lock-ups and gaols, mass punishments, confiscation of lands, cattle, utensils and personal belongings, ill-treatment of women (savage beating, rape, abuse and insults) and children, censorship of the press, searches without warrant, destruction of property, unprecedented police surveillance, parole orders, imprisonment after summary trial, beating of pickets and volunteers — all these repressive measures crushed the movement. Bertrand Russell compared the activities of the British Indian Authorities to the misdeeds of the Nazis in Germany.

Nearly 78,000 Congressmen had gone to gaol. The number of convictions, according to official records, was 14,803 in January 1932; 17,818 in February; 6,909 in March; 5,254 in April. From 3,318 in May 1932, the figure had come down to 2,791 in September 1932. In a letter to Hoare (dated 20 December 1931) Willingdon confessed that he felt he was becoming a sort of Mussolini in India. For nearly eight months Gandhiji had been virtually sealed off from his adherents. In certain provinces, even his photographs could not be published or displayed. Gandhiji wrote to Hoare that repression was crossing all legitimate limits. Both Jawaharlal³¹⁹ and Dr Rajendra Prasad³²⁰ maintain that Congress leaders were not mentally prepared for the Second Civil Disobedience Movement, they rather wanted to avoid it. It looked as if the Congress had entered the battlefield unwillingly.

During the course of the Second Civil Disobedience Movement another crisis had been brewing for several months. On 17 August 1932

(after the third session of the Round Table Conference was over), Ramsay MacDonald (the then Prime Minister) announced His Majesty's Government's provisional scheme of minority representation, known as the Communal Award, whereby not only were the Depressed Classes given separate electorates, they were also conceded the additional right of contesting seats to the general constituencies. Thus the double vote was given to the depressed classes, for their own separate constituencies as well as for the general constituencies. According to the Communal Award, the separate electorates were to lapse automatically at the end of twenty years. Gandhiji, who was then a prisoner in the Yeravada Gaol, was not much surprised by this move, which was calculated to neutralize the weightage of the majority community by driving an additional wedge between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. At the Second Round Table Conference Gandhiji had said that he would resist with his life the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes. In his letter of 11 March 1932, Gandhiji reminded Sir Samuel Hoare that 'this was not said in the heat of the moment or by way of rhetoric'. Gandhiji argued that the injection of the poison of separate electorates was calculated to divide the Hindu community without doing any good to the depressed classes. In the award the British prejudice against the Hindus was cleverly concealed, the imperial interests were safeguarded and the British bias in favour of the Muslim community was covered under a show of fairness. With great dexterity, the quantum and mode of representation was so managed in the Award that it kept the doors wide open for defections, intrigues and unscrupulous and unprincipled alliances. In the provinces, the Muslims were given weightage where the Hindus were in a majority. In the Muslim majority provinces, the Muslim representation was reduced (in the Punjab the Sikhs constituted 13 per cent of population, but obtained 18 per cent or 31 seats), but the Hindu representation was not in the same ratio as the Muslims in Hindu Provinces. In Bengal the award was extraordinarily favourable to the Europeans who were to maintain the balance of power between the Hindus and the Muslims.

The Communal Award was based on the theory that India was not a nation but a congeries of groups (religious, cultural, racial, caste, class and interest). The award gave recognition to eleven minorities — Muslims, Depressed Classes, Backward Classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Commercial and Industrial Classes, Landholders, Labour, Universities and Sikhs. Therefore, Gandhiji's protest against the Communal Award was absolutely relevant, not only from the point of view of the Hindu community, but also from the point of national integrity which was the most vital factor in India's struggle for purna swaraj. On 18 August 1932, Gandhiji wrote to Ramsay

MacDonald that, in protest against the communal award, he would begin a 'fast unto death' on 20 September. Ramsay MacDonald acknowledged Gandhiji's letter 'with much surprise' and 'very sincere regret' but added that the government's decision could not be changed unless the various Indian groups and communities agreed to an alternative as between themselves. The British premier even questioned Gandhiji's motives when he wrote:

As I understand your attitude you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death not in order to secure that the depressed classes should have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, but solely to prevent the depressed classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities today, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures which will have a dominating influence over their future.

It was not possible for Ramsay MacDonald to fathom the depth of Gandhiji's feeling on this sensitive issue which was rooted in his deep humanitarianism and not a recent or temporary political stunt. From his childhood, Gandhiji had come face to face with the evil of untouchability when he was not to touch the family sweeper Uka or play with 'untouchable' class mates. The beautiful anecdote of the Ramayan in which Rama embraces the 'low-caste' boatman who ferried him across the Ganga had made a deep impression on him; and this fellow-feeling with the lowliest of the low grew in his formative years and manifested itself in the satyagraha days in South Africa. To his first ashram in India he welcomed an untouchable family. The abolition of untouchability was one of the chief features of his constructive programme and untouchability was a recurrent theme in his speeches in the 1920s. Gandhiji's deep emotional approach on this subject was evident in his speech at the meeting of the Minorities Committees on 13 November 1931: 'I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote and I would top the poll.'³²¹

On 13 September 1932, the newspapers carried a sensational announcement — Gandhiji would embark on a fast to death as a protest against the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes in the new constitution. In Low's cartoon as a 'Prophecy for 1933', Willingdon was shown going on hunger strike at the instance of 10 Downing Street 'to force Mr Gandhi to admit the new constitution as "touchable" '. Even C.F. Andrews could not justify the ethics of fasting for the solution of a political problem. But it galvanized all sections of the Hindu community — several orthodox Hindu temples were thrown open to

the untouchables. On hearing the news of fast in Dehra Dun Jail, for two days Jawaharlal was in utter confusion. Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan felt as if 'a shadow is darkening today over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun'. The news that Gandhi was about to fast shook India from end to end. As announced, Gandhiji commenced his fast on 20 September. He told press correspondents that his fast was based on faith in his cause, faith in the Hindu community, faith in human nature itself, and faith even in the official world. 'My cry,' he added, 'will rise to the throne of the Almighty God.' Next morning, Gandhiji was taken to a segregated yard in the prison. He spent the day under the thick shade of a low mango tree. Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai were already with him. They were joined by Sarojini Naidu who had been lodged in the women's gaol. At that time, Kasturba was serving her term of imprisonment at Sabarmati.

The government, fearing that Gandhi might die in prison, offered to release him under certain conditions. Gandhiji flatly refused to accept these. However, the government responded, in a fine gesture, by transferring Kasturba from Sabarmati to Poona. Madan Mohan Malaviya summoned the Hindu Leaders' Conference to meet first at Bombay and then at Poona to find a quick solution. The Conference was attended by Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, Rajagopalachari, N.C. Kelkar, Rajendra Prasad and Moonje. All of them were anxious to save Gandhiji's life, though some of them had been bitter critics of Gandhian idiom of politics. This demonstrated Gandhiji's pivotal position in India's struggle for purna swaraj. But Dr B.R. Ambedkar remained adamant on the issue of separate electorates. He knew that no solution to which he did not agree was likely to commend itself to the government. 'Gandhiji was the last person to allow the conference to be stampeded into a wrong decision.'³²² He sent a message to the assembled Hindu leaders through his son, Devadas Gandhi, that he (Devadas) 'as his father's son was prepared to forfeit his father's life rather than see any injury being done to the suppressed classes in mad haste'. Four days passed in discussion — the conference considered a number of proposals, Gandhiji's condition caused grave concern as Ambedkar bargained hard. Suddenly, on the fifth day of the fast Ambedkar gave way. An agreement, popularly known as the Poona Pact, was reached. Under it, the untouchables abandoned their demand for separate electorates. It doubled the representation of the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures but revised the electoral system. Voters from the untouchables were to hold a primary election and to choose a panel of four candidates for each seat, these four candidates were to offer themselves for election to a joint electorate of caste Hindus and untouchables. Reservation of seats was to continue until it was ended by mutual

agreement. The method of primary election was to lapse after ten years. The Poona Pact was ratified by the Hindu Mahasabha.

MacDonald consulted Hoare and Lord Lothian (the Chairman of the Franchise Committee). The British Cabinet accepted the Poona Pact and Gandhi ended his fast on 26 September 1932. While announcing the Communal Award, Ramsay MacDonald had promised to accept any alternative scheme mutually agreed upon by the Hindus and Depressed Classes. Gandhiji declared that he would fast again if the problem of untouchability was not solved within a measurable period. He said, 'Regarding the agreement, I assure my Harijan friends, as I would henceforth like to name them, that they may hold my life as a hostage for its due fulfilment.'³²³ He asserted that his fast had been intended to 'sting the conscience of the Hindu community into right religious action'. It is significant that the proposed new constitution was not acceptable to Gandhiji and the Congress, and the electoral representation was only a part of it. The paradox was that the Poona Pact substituted one scheme of electoral representation of the depressed classes for another. In the revised arrangements of the Poona Pact extra weightage was given to the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures; as against the 71 seats which the British Award had given, the Poona Pact conceded 148. In Bengal the caste Hindu representation had been nibbled at one end by the depressed classes and at the other end by the Europeans.

The Poona Pact did not come into force for nearly four and a half years. Jawaharlal breathed a sigh of relief when Gandhiji's self-imposed ordeal was over. But in the context of the struggle for purna swaraj, Jawaharlal felt that Gandhiji's fast diverted the country's attention to other issues, and many Congress workers had turned to the Harijan cause. 'Probably,' he wrote, 'most of these people wanted an excuse to revert to safer activities which did not involve the risk of gaol going or, worse still, *lathi* blows and confiscation of property.'³²⁴ According to Sumit Sarkar, the motives and significance of Gandhiji's Harijan campaign were ambiguous. He says that Gandhiji in jail had probably started thinking in terms of an honourable retreat from a confrontation which had failed.³²⁵

Thus Gandhiji started from Yeravada gaol one of the greatest campaigns of social reform in history. Under his inspiration an all-India organization for removal of untouchability was established with G.D. Birla as president and A.V. Thakkar as secretary. Gandhiji issued a series of press statements to educate the public on this problem. On 29 September, the government withdrew the special facilities which had been provided to him for anti-untouchability work, sensing that Gandhiji's concentration on Harijan work might ease the pressure in Indian politics. But the Government feared too that Gandhiji might begin another fast to promote the Harijan campaign. Gandhiji arranged

for the publication of a weekly paper, the *Harijan*, which means 'Children of God'. Harijan was Gandhiji's name for the untouchables. He explained its significance in these words: 'All the religions of the world describe God pre-eminently as the Friend of the Friendless, and Help of the Helpless, and the protector of the weak. Who can be more friendless or helpless or weaker than the forty million or more Hindus of India, classified as untouchables?'

Jawaharlal was delighted to read the first two copies of the *Harijan* in Dehra Dun gaol and he pitied the poor Sanatanists (orthodox Hindus). The *Harijan* published vivid descriptions of the conditions of the Harijans whom Gandhiji described as 'the denizens of hell'. Gandhiji in a good chunk of the *Harijan* pointed out the disabilities of the untouchables (although some of them were rare and none of them was universal). In some parts of India the untouchables were denied access to village wells, water-tanks, schools and post offices. They were prevented from wearing sandals and using umbrellas. They (the menfolk) could not wear a dhoti below their knees, and their womenfolk were discouraged from wearing jewellery and clean clothes. The untouchables were not permitted to ride a horse or a cycle, and they had to bow in respect in front of the house of a caste Hindu. In Southern India, certain communities were condemned to remain invisible as well as untouchable.

In Harijan work, Gandhiji's emphasis was on conversion and not compulsion. At the beginning of 1933, Gandhiji encouraged the introduction of temple entry bills in the Central legislature and he took the advice of Jayakar. Willingdon and Malaviya disapproved the Temple Entry Bill. The official attitude was one of indifference. The government did not want to alienate orthodox Hindu opinion. On 8 May 1933, Gandhiji began a twenty-one-day fast for 'self-purification'. General Smuts cabled Gandhiji to desist. This fast was undertaken in sympathy with Kelappan who was working for getting the temples opened to Harijans. To Jawaharlal it was an incomprehensible thing that, on the first day of his fast, Gandhiji was released and taken to 'Parnakuti', Lady Thackersey's house in Poona. There he went through the twenty-one-day fast. Gandhiji recommended the suspension of the movement for a month and requested the government to withdraw ordinances and release all political prisoners. Willingdon insisted on complete termination of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

In mid-June the suspension of civil disobedience was extended for another six weeks. Gandhiji telegraphed to the Viceroy requesting an interview 'to explore the possibilities of peace', and got a polite rebuff. He was again arrested on 1 August and taken to Yeravada Prison. He was released on 4 August but contained within the limits of the city of

Poona. Gandhiji had now formally abandoned mass civil disobedience and permitted only individual civil disobedience. He praised the self-sacrifice and bravery of the numerous civil resisters; but he felt that the secrecy that had attended the movement was fatal to its success. Furthermore, as he said, 'There can be no doubt that fear has seized the common mass. The ordinances have cowed them down.'

Gandhiji himself offered individual satyagraha, defying the order of the government and was rearrested. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Back in gaol, Gandhiji commenced a fast on 16 August as a protest against the denial of the facilities for his Harijan campaign. As his health deteriorated rapidly, he was released. The problem before Gandhiji was that if he went back to gaol, the government would refuse him facilities for Harijan work and if he undertook a fast the government might release him. Now Gandhiji announced his intention not to offer civil disobedience during the unexpired portion of his sentence of a year's imprisonment.

All this distressed Jawaharlal who did not understand Gandhiji's Inner Voice. To him it appeared that God indicated the very date of Mahatma Gandhi's fast. 'What a terrible example to set', Jawaharlal remarked. To Jawaharlal Gandhiji's moral fads including the Harijan campaign were irritating. He could not understand how Gandhiji could accept the present social order based on exploitation. Jawaharlal felt that he was drifting further and further away from Gandhiji ideologically though not emotionally. He was released on 30 August 1933. Having stayed with his mother at Lucknow for some days, Jawaharlal went to Poona and opened his mind to Gandhiji. They had long talks and they realized that they differed considerably in their outlook on life, economics and politics.³²⁶ Yet Jawaharlal's emotional attachment to Gandhiji was so strong that he could not break away from him. Subhas Chandra Bose, in this context remarked, 'With a popularity only second to that of the Mahatma, with unbounded prestige among his countrymen, with a clear brain possessing the finest ideas, with an up-to-date knowledge of modern world movement he [Nehru] lacked the essential quality of leadership, namely the capacity to make decisions and face unpopularity if need be.'³²⁷

Gandhiji's attention was now focused mainly on Harijan work. On 1 September 1933 he issued an appeal on 'Harijan Day'. In September 1933 he moved to Wardha. He announced a gift of the Sabarmati Ashram to the Harijan Sevak Sangh. From 7 November began his all-India tour to promote the Harijan cause. He covered 12,500 miles during the next nine months. He urged caste Hindus to be generous to the Harijans and called on the Harijans to shake off their vices (drink and drugs). Gandhiji reminded caste Hindus that the Conference of

Hindu Leaders had resolved that amongst Hindus none should be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth. So it was their duty to remove all social disabilities of the Harijans. Gandhiji made a fervent appeal for the opening of temples to Harijans and collected eight lakhs of rupees for the Harijan Fund. In his opinion, Malabar was the blackest spot on the untouchability map of India.

In March 1934 Gandhiji suspended his Harijan tour to visit Bihar, which had been stricken by a terrible earthquake. He spent much time there in relief work. Gandhiji described the Bihar earthquake as a retribution for the sin of untouchability. Tagore protested against this interpretation of a physical phenomenon. In May 1934, Gandhiji was at Puri and he decided to cover the remaining itinerary in that province on foot. On 25 June, while Gandhiji was on his way to the municipal hall in Poona, a bomb was thrown at him. He escaped unhurt, but seven persons (including the chief officer of the municipal committee) were injured. This showed that Gandhiji's new emphasis had alienated a section of orthodox opinion. His Harijan meetings had been disrupted at Buxur, Jasidih and Ajmer. Gandhiji said: 'I am not aching for martyrdom but if it comes my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in defence of the faith I hold it common with millions of Hindus, I shall have well earned it.'

In August 1934 Gandhiji declared that 'untouchability is on its last legs'. Ambedkar denounced Gandhiji's Harijan upliftment campaign. He observed, 'If the Hindus wish to be one they will have to discard Hinduism.'³²⁸ Ambedkar also said, 'nothing can emancipate the caste except the destruction of the caste-system.'³²⁹ He pointed out that Gandhiji defended the original *varnashram* system and advised caution in inter-marriage and inter-dining.

Rajagopalachari thus summed up the significance of the Harijan campaign in an article, 'The Revolution is over': 'Untouchability is not yet gone. But the revolution is really over and what remains is but the removal of the debris.' To many, Gandhiji's Harijan welfare and upliftment movement was a new emphasis in India. But we should remember that in Tamil Nadu, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker's Self-Respect Movement, a populist style of anti-Brahmin movement had advanced rapidly in the 1930s. Naicker had had a passing flirtation with socialism, but Singaravelu Chetiar was an atheist and socialist. Some leaders of the Self-Respect Movement like P. Jeevananandan became famous Communist leaders. It has to be noted also that Gandhiji encountered an anti-religious mood in Kerala after the death of the Gandhian leader of Kerala's Ezhava caste organizations. Radicals like C. Kesavan and K. Aiyappan thought temple-entry movement to be relatively trivial in the context of anti-imperialist struggle. Yet such agitations definitely helped to spread the

ideal of purna swaraj down to the lowest and most oppressed sections of rural India. It developed and strengthened the traditional loyalty of the Harijans (in spite of the opposition of Dr Ambedkar) towards the Congress.

The government did not disturb the Harijan campaign for a special reason. Willingdon telegraphed to Hoare on 9 November 1932 that Gandhiji would probably prefer that the issue of the Civil Disobedience Movement should for the present be allowed to sleep and he wanted to concentrate all his attention on the Harijan upliftment. 'This development suits us and I would certainly do nothing to disturb it.' This was Willingdon's view and decision on this issue. Willingdon thought that Gandhiji's Harijan campaign was the effort of a vain man to remain in the limelight.

Gandhiji's preoccupation with the Harijan campaign baffled even his friends. In May 1933, when Gandhiji announced his three-week fast for 'self-purification', C. Rajagopalachari wired to Vallabhbhai Patel that it was 'stupid to hope that Bapu may survive the ordeal', and that the tragedy would 'put back the clock for Harijans and the country'. 'I agree,' replied Vallabhbhai, 'that it is stupid to hope that he will survive this ordeal, but I am not one of the stupid lot. It is much more stupid, however, to try to persuade him to alter or abandon this resolve with any hope of success.' The sequence of events, in which the guiding factor was Gandhiji's 'Inner Voice', baffled his closest colleagues to despair. Once Srinivasa Sastri remonstrated with Gandhiji: 'The expressions inner voice and God's call and such like are becoming commoner than ever in your writing. As expressing your state of mind, they are quite proper. But these exalted phrases have been overworked in the past. He who uses them incurs a risk. An old saying warns us not to take the name of God in vain. Neither may we take it too often.' They thought that those were side issues, entirely unconnected with the struggle for Purna Swaraj.

Subhas Chandra Bose and V.J. Patel openly declared that Gandhiji as a political leader had failed. Subhas said that Gandhiji was like an old piece of furniture who should be thrown away into the dustbin of politics. Jawaharlal felt sad at the winding up of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Aney, the Acting President, on Gandhiji's advice, that had meant so much to him for many years. He gave vent to his feelings in his *Autobiography*:

I confess that I have often been guilty of it and I am wholly unrepentant. But even if it was a serious matter, was a vast national movement involving scores of thousands directly and millions indirectly to be thrown out of gear because an individual had erred? This seemed to me a monstrous proposition and an immoral one.³³⁰

Jawaharlal realized later that the Harijan campaign was another route to the goal of national unity and that it was not withdrawal from the political world. K.F. Nariman, a member of the Congress Working Committee said: 'How to induce Gandhiji to rid himself of this almost incorrigible habit. This perpetual blundering, blending of religion and politics.' Gandhiji admitted his weakness — his 'intense introspection, searching of heart and waiting upon God'. He said: 'I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable'. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action.' Gandhiji decided to resume civil disobedience, but to confine it to select individuals. He announced his intention to march from his Ashram at Ahmedabad to Ras. To the government the Individual Satyagraha was more than a little nuisance. On 1 August 1933 Gandhiji was arrested. The token revival of civil disobedience (Individual Satyagraha) since July 1933 kept the movement 'alive' more in theory than in practice. Gandhiji was convinced that truth and non-violence even pursued by an individual civil resister would ultimately triumph. Individual Satyagraha took the form of picketing liquor shops, shouting slogans, distributing leaflets, waving flags in court and taking out illegal processions. The Individual Satyagraha with its unattractive programme could not attract mass support. Bihar and Orissa produced the maximum number of jail-goers. There was a decline of the appeal of Individual Satyagraha in Bengal, particularly among the Bhadrak class. Only Midnapur showed some interest. Jawaharlal, Govind Ballabh Pant, Purushottam Das Tandon and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai were of the opinion that Individual Satyagraha was inadequate. They wanted a peasant movement in India.

In the opinion of Jamnadas Mehta, Gandhiji was unfit to be a political leader. He denounced the Individual Satyagraha plan. D.D. Sathaye and G.A. Deshpande criticized Jamnadas Mehta for his uncharitable remarks against Gandhiji. The Individual Satyagraha movement gained momentum in August and September 1933. Early in August 1933, *News-week* remarked that Mahatma Gandhi had been popping in and out of prison like a cuckoo in and out of a clock. But the *Christian Century* of the USA nominated Gandhiji for the Nobel Peace Prize for 1933. Its final suspension (suspension of even individual civil resistance except in Gandhiji's person) came to Jawaharlal in gaol with 'a stab of pain'. Jawaharlal felt that Gandhiji did not allow others to think. Clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against Gandhiji's strange method in politics which was expected to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get swaraj.³³¹ Gandhiji's justification of satyagraha as a 'spiritual weapon' was described by Jawaharlal as 'an amazing performance for a leader of a political movement'. When Gandhiji expressed his views in favour of the revival of the Swaraj Party, Jawa-

harlal was perturbed, because both of them had been opposed to the council-entry programme. Vallabhbhai Patel and S.A. Brelvi doubted the wisdom of this step. In his letter to Vallabhbhai (dated 23 April 1934) Gandhiji pointed out that the revival of the Swaraj Party was badly needed. Gandhiji wrote:

The revival of the Swaraj Party was badly needed. The group which has stood so many vicissitudes does need a niche in the Congress. May be there is an element of inexperience and self-interest among those who are in favour of revival of this group. But we have to accept the facts. We can reform this group; we can control it; we can do nothing more and nothing else. I have helped the Swarajist Party to stand on its feet. They had the desire to contest elections, and to return to legislatures but did not have the courage to do so.

Dr Ansari, Sherwani, Asaf Ali, Khaliquzzaman wrote an open letter to Gandhiji that the Congress should turn from civil disobedience to the ballot box.

Business advice (Birla and Thakurdas mainly) and pressure played a key role in the process of formation of a definite Congress Right. Willingdon held Birla responsible for much of the money behind the Civil Disobedience Movement. Business groups were interested in council entry of Congressmen as an effective pressure group which could lobby for them and fight against communism and socialism. Rajagopalachari, Satyamurti, Bhulabhai Desai, Ansari and B.C. Roy were interested in electoral politics. Birla wrote to Thakurdas on 12 April 1934, 'I should like you to keep yourself in touch with Bhulabhai.'

On 6 June 1934, the government announced that since civil disobedience had been formally and effectively discontinued, the notification declaring the constituent parts of the Congress organization illegal was being withdrawn. The inevitable return to parliamentary methods of political struggle deeply perturbed Jawaharlal. His strong feelings were expressed in a letter to Gandhiji in which he wrote of his spiritual isolation and the toning down of the Congress ideal of purna swaraj. Gandhiji's answer was that the ideals of the Congress had not changed. He wrote to Jawaharlal on 17 August 1934:

I am the same as you knew me in 1917 and after. I have the same passion that you know me to possess for the common goal. I want complete independence for the country in the full English sense of the term. And every resolution that has pained you has been framed with that end in view . . . But I fancy that I have a knack for knowing the need of the time. And the resolutions are response thereto.

Jawaharlal also thought that the economic policy of the Congress had swung to the right. In mid-June 1934 the Congress Working Committee

criticized class war and confiscation of private property as contrary to Gandhiji's creed of non-violence. As a socialist, Jawaharlal interpreted it as a retreat from the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy. He was furious. He wrote to Gandhiji: 'The Congress from top to bottom is a caucus and opportunism triumphs. . . . And it is the leaders and their policy that shape the activities of their followers. . . . I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues.'³³² On socialism, Jawaharlal remarked, 'those views may be right or wrong but they deserve at least some understanding before the Working Committee sets out to denounce them.' Mascarenes thought that Jawaharlal was the best ally of the Socialists. In a letter to Jawaharlal, (19 December 1933) Minoo Masani asked for Jawaharlal's support for organizing the Congress Socialist Party in India.³³³

The Socialists rejected Gandhism on two counts: the axiom of change of heart and the constructive programme. May 1934 saw the birth of the Congress Socialist Party in India. Sumit Sarkar says that the emergence of the Left Alternative lay in the logic of the Civil Disobedience Movement. It held its first All-India Conference at Patna on 17 May 1934, under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva. On 25 September the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and reiterated the Congress goal of *purna swaraj* — it was virtually a repetition of the Karachi Congress Resolution. Gandhiji became convinced that some of his followers were tired of his views and methods — explanations became necessary to his closest colleagues like Jawaharlal.

In Gandhiji's opinion the socialist group were a body of men in a hurry. Gandhiji attended a conference of the Congress Socialists of Gujarat in the Harijan Ashram at Sabarmati. He felt most deeply the differences between himself and his closest colleagues in the Congress on the crucial issues of non-violence and constructive programme which had once struck their imagination in the struggle for *purna swaraj*. He decided to retire from the Congress in October 1934. Gandhiji wrote to Mira Ben on 12 October 1934: 'I shall better influence the Congress by being outside. I shall cease to be the weight that I am just now.'

Tej Bahadur Sapru maintained that even after the so-called retirement, Gandhiji would still continue to dominate the Congress. 'I do not leave the Congress in anger or in a huff nor yet in disappointment,' Gandhiji wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel. The Bombay session of the Congress (26-8 October 1934) under the presidentship of Dr Rajendra Prasad did not make any headway towards the socialist goal but adopted the idea of a constituent assembly for settling the constitution of the country. It also adopted Gandhiji's programme for *khaddar* and village industries. But the most sensational news both to the press and the

public was that Gandhiji would not be even a primary member of the Congress. Gandhiji left the Congress with a vote of confidence and a standing invitation to re-enter.³³⁴

The *New York Times* regarded Gandhiji's action as a strategic retirement and it observed that the year ahead would be a Franciscan year for Gandhi. According to Willingdon, Gandhiji's strategy was to organize an efficient Congress to harry the government in legislatures, while through rural propaganda Gandhiji wanted to instil the ideals of the Congress into the minds of villagers as a prelude to a renewed Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji's letter to Hanson, dated 31 October 1934 is indeed revealing. Gandhiji pointed out that his intention to retire from the Congress was to disarm all suspicion about the character of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Through his constructive programme he would like to bring about a change of mind which would erode the acquiescence on which the Raj was founded. Gandhiji was confident that his constructive programme would train the people for a final conflict with Britain and 'produce Purna Swaraj'. By leaving the Congress, Gandhiji restored freedom to the Congress and he regained freedom of action for himself.³³⁵

The interaction of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal was possible in the struggle for purna swaraj because, in spite of the fundamental differences in approach, both never believed in 'constitutional arithmetic'. The Act of 1935 gave too little and too late from the point of view of freedom-fighters in the struggle for purna swaraj. The official attitude became obvious when in August 1936 Linlithgow said that he could not change even a comma of the Government of India Act of 1935. But the attitude of the Labour Party in Parliament clearly showed that the struggle for purna swaraj had not been in vain. Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party in Parliament had argued that 'no legislation for the better government of India will be satisfactory which does not secure the goodwill and co-operation of the Indian people by recognizing explicitly India's right to Dominion Status and by providing within the means of its attainment.' Attlee regretted the omission of the phrase 'Dominion Status' from the Bill.³³⁶

It is easy to point out the defects of the Act of 1935 as Jawaharlal did. Considerable statecraft had been employed by Baldwin, Birkenhead, Ramsay MacDonald, Wedgewood Benn and Hoare to offer Indians 'a bastard federalism' with some limited possibilities for popular government in the provinces. The gift was offered in the year of the Golden Jubilee of the Congress. No session of the Congress was held during that year. Jawaharlal considered the possibility of 'co-operation with the Raj' a grave danger to the struggle for purna swaraj. He feared that the Act of 1935, in the name of justice to the minority groups, would split

the Indian nation into several religious and social compartments.³³⁷ As a socialist, Jawaharlal saw that the Act had deliberately protected various vested interests and given much power to obscurantists and reactionaries. Jawaharlal shared fully the opinion of the most eminent Liberals, who described the Act of 1935 as 'the quintessence of the most venomous opposition to all our national aspirations.'³³⁸

Jawaharlal wanted a political structure which would help Indians in tackling the growing poverty of the masses. The real test of the Act of 1935 from his viewpoint was: 'Does it help us and will it make it easier for us to tackle these problems and solve them?' The answer was obvious and so Jawaharlal, in his presidential address at the Lucknow Congress in April 1936, asserted that a 'Constituent Assembly is the only proper and democratic method for the framing of our Constitution'. No wonder 'the Voice' in the struggle for purna swaraj denounced the new Act and called it 'a new charter of slavery to strengthen the bonds of imperialist domination and to intensify the exploitation of our masses'.³³⁹

To Gandhiji, the Act of 1935 was an attempt to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority. It did not offer freedom to India, but it did create an electorate of thirty million. He suggested that 'If the Congress worked the new constitution to achieve its goal of independence, it would avoid a bloody revolution and a mass civil disobedience movement.' The Act of 1935 was not totally disappointing in the context of the struggle for purna swaraj. Low tells us that village-voters bowed before the Congress candidate boxes in 1937 as a mark of respect to Mahatma Gandhi and his contribution in the struggle for purna swaraj. To quote Barun De: 'But the most important benefit was psychological. The people felt different. There was a taste of victory in seeing the familiar jailbirds in seats of office. There was a spirit of optimism and self-confidence in the air. Here at last, the people thought, were the first intimations of freedom.'³⁴⁰

In the struggle for purna swaraj, Gandhiji lost the battle in the 1930s, but the war was not over. Once more in 1942, he gave the clarion call to the fighters to restart the struggle, and the nation till then patiently awaited the call to fight. Gandhiji's pivotal position in the anti-imperialist struggle became evident when he decided to begin his 'fast unto death' on 20 September 1932. On 15 September Jawaharlal who was in Dehra Dun jail, expressed his fear of Gandhiji's possible death in these words: 'And whom shall I go to when I am in doubt and require wise counsel, or am afflicted and in sorrow and need loving comfort? What shall we all do when our beloved chief who inspired us and led us has gone?'³⁴¹ It is also significant to note that Willingdon wrote to Hoare on 1 July 1933 that 'the only man who might pull the Congress together

is Gandhi'. Gandhiji was also *Time* magazine's Man of the Year and his portrait adorned its first issue in 1931. Many contemporaries of Gandhiji thought him to be a Don Quixote in Indian politics, as V.S. Srinivasa Sastri did, and assessed the impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement in entirely negative terms, forgetting its important benefits.

The struggle for purna swaraj helped to turn Congress into a well-organized all-India party, proved a powerful bonding agent among Indians under the Congress banner, gave many activists a new sense of unity, provided recruiting grounds for the Congress and generated political awareness in remote villages. It convinced many Indians as well as the Government that the Congress could not be ignored. According to Judith Brown, the legacy of the Civil Disobedience Movement was political capital on which the Congress was to live for at least three more decades.³⁴² The sacrifices of the people in the struggle for purna swaraj had not gone in vain. In a note to Gandhiji dated 5 July 1933, Dr Ansari pointed out that the tremendous response that the Congress received from the people was the measure of the success of the movement. Its far-reaching repercussions were felt in the following decades and even in 1947. On 9 April 1932, the Congress flag was flown by Forrester Paton in London over Trafalgar Square and on 17 April 1932, Pethick Lawrence said that a time would come when Indians would win independence. Above all, we should not forget that in 1947, when Attlee's momentous declaration of 20 February (fixing a date for the British withdrawal from India) was under fire in the House of Lords, it was the former Lord Irwin's support which tilted the scales in its favour.

Toynbee says that Gandhiji's epithet of 'Mahatma' is not just an honorific — it tells the truth about him. His was indeed a great soul. He was undoubtedly the peer of the greatest souls of previous ages. He wanted to raise the spiritual level of life in the slough of politics.³⁴³ In the midst of tyranny, prolific greed, a miasma of intrigues, self-obsession and pandemonium of expression, Gandhiji proclaimed the victory of ultimate truth in man. The struggle for Purna Swaraj as he conceived it was a ceaseless effort towards the heights, the struggle within ourselves, the insatiable desire to progress in purity, wisdom and love — and he remained as our guide to the last step of ascent.

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Chapter IV

The Muslims and the Freedom Struggle in India 1919-1935

Moin Shakir

1. Pan-Islamism and the Indian Muslims

THE END OF THE First World War inaugurated a new era in the history of India's freedom movement. The major issues of the national struggle were, in a sense, a direct result of the victory of the Allied countries. The expectations in the minds of the Indian people raised by their outstanding contributions to the war effort and the victory of the Allies on the one hand, and on the other the continued distrust of the Indians and reliance on repressive measures on the part of the government, determined, to a large extent, the course of the national movement during the inter-war years. The Khilafat Movement, the Non-cooperation Movement and the introduction of dyarchy may be considered as the natural aftermath of the First World War.

The economic situation and outlook after the war were very bleak and depressing for the common people. The country was faced with a severe economic crisis owing to the decline in the level of agricultural and industrial production. There was an overall decline in expenditure on goods and services in the public sector.¹

The food problem was very acute. India became a deficit country. Upto 1919-1920 India was still a net exporter of foodgrains, the export surplus being 4 lakh tons. But since 1921 she turned into a net importer of foodgrains, and imports continued to increase steadily until the beginning of the Second War, when the country was making a net import of 1.38 million tons.²

The Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India stated that the leading industries were yielding phenomenal profits, but wages lagged behind prices and often rendered the life of the people harder than before.³ There had been an unprecedented rise in prices and in the cost of living. The retail price index of foodgrains in India rose from 100 in 1914 to 169 in 1921.⁴ Apart from foodgrains, the prices of other commodities such as cloth, salt and kerosene oil had been rising continuously

during the war years.⁵ In addition to this, industrial retrenchment, demobilization of lakhs of soldiers,⁶ recruited in wartime as combatants and non-combatants, the disastrous failure of the monsoon in 1918, the outbreak of a virulent epidemic of influenza, causing shortage of labour, had telling effects on the condition of the rural and urban poor. It is not an accident that the 1920s saw the emergence of the trade union movement, of peasant organizations, and of a youth and student upsurge in a big way. The Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Khilafat Movement were an expression of the political awakening in the country during these years of ferment.

In the 33rd session of the Indian National Congress held in Delhi in 1918, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Chairman, Reception Committee, pointed out that the question of Muslim holy places, the Khilafat and Muslim states was closely connected with the war and its results. He said that, for the safety of the empire, it was necessary to safeguard most scrupulously the rights of Muslim states and to respect Muslim sentiment regarding their places of worship. Secondly, the Muslims were deeply agitated over the safety and independence of their Holy Places. These places are sanctified by the pious memories of their great prophets and the sacred injunctions of their Holy Book, and in fact occupy a central place in their social, political and religious life. Thirdly, closely associated with this was the question of the Khilafat, a purely religious question whose decision rested entirely with the Muslims. It was part and parcel of Muslim faith and no outside influence whatsoever would be tolerated by the Muslims.⁷

Dr M.A. Ansari, in his speech at the All India Muslim League Session, Delhi, 1918, asserted that never in their varied history of over 1300 years had Muslims been faced with a situation like the one they were facing then. That belt of Muslim States which

once extended from the shores of the Atlantic to the confines of the Chinese Empire has, bit by bit, shrunk to a mere shadow. In Europe, the Northern littoral of the Black Sea, Wallachia, Rumania, Greece and Macedonia have been lost one after the other, in quick succession. In Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli and Egypt are gone. Caucasasia and the Khanates showed the same fate and the integrity and independence of Persia, after the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, is a huge political joke. Even the Bedouin of the African and Arabian deserts is being reduced to give up his nomadic life and take to the refinements of *cafes Chantants*. Turkey, which has fought the battles of Islam for many centuries, is in imminent and grave danger of being parcelled out into small states to the great detriment of the Muslim world.⁸

Dr Ansari stressed that the Holy Book and the sayings of the Prophet ordain unity and fraternity among the Muslims. The allegiance of the

Muslims to the Sultan, Waheeduddin Muhammed VI, was a part of Muslim religious faith for he was the rightful Commander of the Faithful and Khilafat-ur-Rasul. He was also the Khilafat-ul-Muslimeen, Sultan-ul-Islam and Khadim-Haramain-ish-Sharifain. It was the duty of the Khalifa to protect the Holy Places and remove the non-Muslims from the Jazirat-ul-Arab which extends from Aden to the mountain of Sham in length; and in breadth from Jeddah and the sea coast to the agricultural low levels of Iraq (Mesopotamia).⁹

Both Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr M.A. Ansari, in their speeches in the Congress and Muslim League sessions of 1918, expressed their gratitude to Mahatma Gandhi for his letter of 29 April 1918 addressed to His Excellency the Viceroy, in which he had defined, as enjoined upon leaders, especially of the Hindu community, a code of moral and political conduct towards the Muslims and the right attitude towards Muslim sentiments.¹⁰

A.K. Fazlul Haq, in his presidential address to the Muslim League (1918), also referred to the question relating to Khilafat and the protection of the Holy Places. He said:

We are loyal subjects of the rulers, and are prepared to prove our loyalty in actual practice by making sacrifices. But this temporal loyalty is subject to the limitation imposed by our undoubted loyalty to our faith. We wish to warn our rulers that in making sacrifices one after another, the dividing line may soon be reached; and we need hardly emphasize that in case there is a conflict between Divine Laws and the mandates of our rulers, every true Mussalman will allow the Divine Commandments to prevail over human laws, even at the risk of laying down his life.¹¹

The speeches of Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari and Fazlul Haq set the tone for the ensuing Khilafat Movement. They forcefully expressed the Muslim anxiety over the fate of the Muslim states, religious concern for the institution of Khilafat and apprehension over non-Muslim control of the Jazirat-ul-Arab. They also visualized a conflict between their own Divine Laws and the temporal authority of the British. Among the Hindu leaders it was Gandhi who correctly read the Muslim sentiments, and that helped in establishing his unquestioned supremacy in the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation Movements. One of the important events of the Muslim League session in 1918 was the presence of the ulema which signified the unity between the religious and political leaders. Prominent Muslim divines included Maulana Abdul Bari, Azad Subhani, Ibrahim Sialkoti, Sanaullah Amritsari, Ahmed Saeed, Kifyatullah and Abdul Latif.¹² Equally significant was the support of Gandhi and the Congress. This signified a new approach to the communal problem and the national movement. It was to be a new experiment in 'the use of a religious

idiom in politics' on the basis of 'a perceptive insight into the social loyalties of the individual and into the manner these loyalties could be invoked for political action'.¹³

The Khilafat agitation owed its origin to Muslim fears of the hostility of the British Government, a Christian power, towards the integrity of the Turkish Empire. At the same time it will not be out of place to refer to the growth of Pan-Islamic tendencies in India during the last quarter of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th. It is true that Indian Muslims have never been a homogeneous and well-knit community. But they are bound by the religion of Islam into a worldwide fraternity. Muslims, therefore, evince keen brotherly interest in each other's welfare. This fraternal interest was not looked upon as detrimental to the growth of nationalism and national independence. The Indian Muslims' concern for their co-religionists outside India had not hampered the development of an independent national political outlook and political action. Muslim attachment to the institution of Khilafat was a matter of faith and history. In 19th century India, the Muslim thinkers, possibly due to the minority status and backwardness of the community, were compelled to consider a universal Caliphate as the political solution for the whole of Dar-al-Islam.¹⁴

The British also exploited Muslim pro-Turkish feeling for their own policy objectives. During the mutiny of 1857 the British had obtained a proclamation from the Ottoman Sultan advising the Indian Muslims to be loyal to the British; as also during the Crimean War. The British themselves had magnified Turkey in Indian eyes.¹⁵

During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8 and Graeco-Turkish War of 1897, the Indian Muslims showed great sympathy for Turkey and collected money for Turkish relief. The British rulers took serious note of Lord Lytton's warning to Salisbury not to rely on the assurance that Indian Muslims cared nothing for the fate of the Ottoman sultan. He wrote:

It is my strong impression that at the present moment, the life of all your officers and European subjects in India mainly depend on the course of your Eastern Policy and its freedom from all appearance of subserviency to Russia. . . . There is no getting over the fact that the British Empire is Mohamedan power, and that it entirely depends upon the policy of Her Majesty's government, whether the sentiment of our Mohamedan subjects is to be an immense security or an immense danger, to us.¹⁶

What made Lytton react sharply was the suspicion on the part of the Muslims that the British were actively conniving with Russia in the 'spoilation of Turkey' and openly 'sharing the plunder'.¹⁷ Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was perhaps the only liberal Muslim leader who realized

the political implications of the Pan-Islamic sentiment. He bitterly criticized the administrative policies of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and maintained that the Sultan could not have any spiritual jurisdiction over the Indian Muslims as Khalifa. His title of Khalifa was effective only in his own land and only over the Muslims under his sway.¹⁸

At the end of the 19th century, Sultan Abdul Hamid II started showing keen interest in the Pan-Islamic programme. His object was to save his regime from external attack and from the growing nationalist movement at home.¹⁹ But the regime of the Khalifa was overthrown by the Young Turks in 1908 and with it collapsed the Pan-Islamic dreams of the Sultan.

In 1912, Pan-Islamic feelings were being revived again in a big way. The Italian attack on Libya (1911), the French declaration of its Protectorate over Morocco (1911), the Balkan War (1912) and the Russian bombardment of the holy city of Mashad (1912) made the educated and uneducated Muslims feel that the Christian-Western powers were out to destroy Islamic culture and enslave Muslims. Britain obviously was the main target of the Muslim intellectuals' attack. The Muslims correlated the attack on Muslim countries with British hostility to the Muslim interests at home, particularly in North India. A.P. MacDonnell's attitude in matters of recruitment of the educated classes in the bureaucracy undermined the position of the Urdu-speaking Muslim elite. The language policy of encouraging Hindi was seen by the Muslims as a threat to the cultural and social life of the community. The annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911), rejection of the university scheme (1912), and the Kanpur Mosque incident (1913) indicated how the wind was beginning to blow. The new Muslim leaders — 'The Young gentlemen of progressive tendencies' — were experiencing the inadequacy of the Aligarh framework of political action and beginning to evolve a radically different strategy. They abandoned faith in British fairplay and justice; called for close involvement in the Congress programme and its activities, joining hands with the religious leaders of the community, and stressing on the Islamic identity of the Indian Muslims.

The ulema, whose authority over the Muslim community was steadily eroded by the various measures of the government, were unhappy with British rule. The Aligarh Movement had eclipsed them and rendered them ineffective in the political matters of the community and the country. In the beginning of the 20th century they felt the need to establish rapport with the English-educated members of the Muslim community. One such effort was made by Ubaidullah Sindhi in 1909. He set up an organization called Jamaitul Ansar at Deoband. Ostensibly a non-political body, it aimed at imparting religious instruction and teaching Arabic to Muslim students in government schools and colleges.

One of its objects was to place well-trained imams in Mosques and publish inexpensive religious literature for the masses. It was also to provide guidance to the community in religious and legal matters. Similar were the objects of the Nazarat-I Ma'arif-al-Qurania which was established by Ubaidullah in the Fatehpuri Mosque in Delhi.²⁰

Maulana Abdul Bari who played a prominent role during the Khilafat agitation was known for his pro-Turkish sympathy. He set up a number of Muslim religious organizations with the object of spreading Islamic knowledge and awareness in the community. In 1910 he established the Majlis-e-Islah. In the same year, the Anjuman-e-Muidal Islam was founded by him. Its aims were 'to work for the religious progress of the Muslim community within the laws of the current government; to help Muslims progress in wordly matters; and to propagate the injunctions of the Shariat in the Muslim community.'²¹

Shaukat Ali and Dr Ansari organized the Red Crescent Mission in 1912. It was planned that the Muslim doctors and assistants should go to the Turkish front as a medical mission. It was the first concrete step on the part of the Indian Muslim community to help their Turkish co-religionists. In December 1912, the Indian Medical Mission, under Dr M.A. Ansari, reached Constantinople. It provided an opportunity to the members of the mission to develop contacts with Turkish politicians and statesmen. The members observed that the spirit of the Turkish nation was not dead and one of the results of the mission was a strengthening of ties between Turkey and India.²²

In 1913 Abdul Bari, with the help of Shaukat Ali and M.H. Kidwai, established the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-e-Kaaba. Its object was to maintain the honour and safety of the Kaaba and defend the holy places against non-Muslim aggression; to ensure which, the members were at all times to be ready to sacrifice their lives and property.²³

What is significant in the organization of the various religio-cultural associations is the growing understanding and mutual trust between the religious leaders and young English-educated Muslim politicians. There appeared to be an honest urge on the part of both these sections to come together and to rouse the community against the injustice and humiliation perpetrated by the British Government. This development led to the quick and almost total eclipse of pro-British and anti-Congress Muslim leaders. The British officials and non-officials looked upon this as a quite unpalatable and perturbing change. Sir Valentine Chirol, a British journalist, warned the Viceroy Lord Hardinge:

I am very much concerned at the tone of several letters I have received by the last mail from India. *Mah* took the opportunity . . . to express, almost in menacing tones, their resentment of British indifference, if not complicity,

in the 'spoilation' of Islam which is going on all over the world. Even the Aga Khan tells me that the bitterness produced by Morocco, Persia and Tripoli, is driving the Indian *Mah* into the arms of the Hindus, and that all he and moderate men of his way of thinking can hope to do is try and prevent their co-religionists from joining hands with the more extreme Congress party. I cannot help thinking that it would be worth our while to take a little more trouble to enlighten *Mah* leaders as to the true inwardness and purpose of British policy.²⁴

Mr Petrie, then Assistant Director of Intelligence Bureau, in his report of February 1912, wrote that

the belief, held up to that time by Muhammadans in India, that the British Government was a safe custodian of Islamic interests, was rapidly evaporating; and further that a rumour was gaining credence to the effect that the Christian Powers had set themselves of deliberate purpose to encompass the ruin of Islam, with which object Great Britain had entered into a secret alliance with Italy with respect to the latter's attack on Turkey The sympathy of all Indian Muhammadans with Turkey especially, which is the custodian of the sacred places of Islam, is still very real and must continue to influence the political outlook of the illiterate and partially educated for some time to come. . . . It is peculiarly easy to confuse in the Muslim mind the issues of religion and politics, and it may be assumed that whenever Britain's political relations with Muslim countries admit of representation as hostility to Islamic religion, there will be no lack of persons, just as at present, to impart the sinister twist calculated to influence the latent fanatic.²⁵

In July 1912, Mr Petrie anticipated that 'a union with the Hindu Congress Party' was the probable direction in which the Muslim politicians might turn.²⁶ Meston brilliantly described the dynamics of the Pan-Islamic movement in India. He wrote:

The troubles of Turkey have, among other unfortunate consequences, brought to the front a type of young Muhammadan in India who will always be a problem to us. He has little to do, and little to live upon, a poor education and no stability of character. Excitement is everything to him, and agitation provides a congenial and frequently a remunerative employment. The sufferings of Turkey and the atrocities of her enemies, coupled with the supposed indifference or hostility of the British Government, give him the text for fervid speeches at public meetings or in mosques, or for unbalanced newspaper articles, which have a considerable effect on a comparatively illiterate audience. Side by side with this type, we have the unforgiving religious bigot, who draws from the Turkish defeats a revival of his smouldering dislike of Christians and of the British ascendancy in India. Finally, we have — and this at present is the most powerful member of the combination — a group of energetic, clever, ambitious, sometimes

personally embittered men, whose aim is to displace the natural leaders of the Muhammadan community, and to become for a time the leaders themselves. Their motives are probably mixed, but are certainly not free from a large ingredient of self-aggrandizement. Their weapons are invective, a multiplication of racial grievances, and opposition to the Government. By invective they beat down the attempts of the older-fashioned, moderate but extremely sensitive leaders of the community to resist their domination. By racial grievances they hope to unite the Muhammadans in allegiance to themselves. By opposition to the Government they believe, that they will eventually wring out concessions which will prove to their community that they, and not the loyalists, are the leaders who may profitably be followed.²⁷

The political ideology to this movement was provided by professional politicians like Abul Kalam Azad and Mohamed Ali through their writings in *Al-Hilal* and *Comrade*. They aggressively put forward the idea of unity of religion and politics, sovereignty of Islam, utility of extremist methods which facilitated Muslim participation in the larger national movement and opened a new vista of communal unity in the country.²⁸

During the First World War some schemes were prepared and some abortive attempts were made to overthrow the British Government. But none of them was a well-thought-out and *mass-based* organizational effort. The Sedition Committee Report mentioned these attempts of

some Mohamedan fanatics to provoke first sedition and then rebellion in India. For the purpose of accomplishing these object they seek to cooperate with the enemies of Britain. Their methods of waging war range from subterranean intrigue and propaganda to open defection. Sometimes they send recruits or collect or remit money. Sometimes they go themselves. Always, they preach sedition. Against their designs the loyalty of the general Muslim community and the effective power of the government are the only safeguards.²⁹

The attitude, outlook and political activities of the Muslim leaders after the death of Sir Syed, in general, and after 1912, in particular, underlined a concern for Muslim interests and Islamic identity. But it would be wrong to attribute it to Pan-Islamism. Pan-Islamism did have intrinsic sentimental value but the greater motivation seemed to be to encounter the realities created by British rule in India and its policy towards the Muslim countries. Behind Pan-Islamic sympathy lay the elite perception of being in minority, a search for the attainment of better and higher status in society, an urge for solidarity and a desire to maintain a distinct and 'historically important' community status in the country. The ingredients of Pan-Islamism in India were the realities of Indian politics and society rather than an attachment to the institution of the Khilafat.

2. The Khilafat Agitation

The Khilafat agitation should be understood against this background. As mentioned above, the important landmark in the origin of the Khilafat agitation was the 1918 Congress session in Delhi and the simultaneous Muslim League session in the same city. In the Muslim League session, apart from the speeches of Dr Ansari and A.K. Fazlul Haq, two important speeches were delivered by the representatives of the class of ulema, one by Kifayatullah and another by Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal. M. Kifayatullah reiterated that religion and politics are not two separate things for the followers of Islam. The ulema, in the past, had left politics to the League but when the call went out, they were only too glad to join the political body. The government should keep their promise to respect the holy places which it had made to the Indian Muslims. Now the government must evacuate Jerusalem and Najaf. If they failed to do so, he would not answer for the loyalty of the people. Abdul Bari's speech was very important. He began

by taking exception to the Union Jack having been used in decorating the hall, saying that although it was the flag of Britain, it contained the emblem of the cross, which Muhammadans could not respect. In his prepared speech he discussed the question whether India is *Dar ul Islam* or *Dar ul Harb*, and stated that in *Dar ul Islam* there must be complete religious liberty. If a Muslim country is attacked, the inhabitants of *Dar ul Islam* are bound to go to its assistance. He urged Indian Muhammadans to continue their efforts to secure the evacuation of the Holy places by non-Muslims. As regards the Khilafat, he said that the Sultan of Turkey was the only rightful Khalifa and it was the duty of every Muhammadan to help him to maintain his position. The Sharif of Mecca was a rebel and could not possibly become Khalifa.³⁰

After the Delhi session of the Muslim League, Abdul Bari worked to secure a *fatwa* on the subject of Khilafat and the holy places from the ulema representing different schools of Muslim theology and succeeded in doing so.³¹ In March 1919 the Council of the Muslim League at Lucknow decided to send a deputation to England to present the Muslim viewpoint on Khilafat and the holy places.

Here mention should be made of Gandhi's campaign (February 1919) of passive resistance against the Rowlatt Bills. He considered the bills to be an 'unmistakable symptom of a deep-seated disease in the governing body. It needs therefore to be drastically treated. . . . The bills must intensify the hatred and ill-will against the State, of which the deeds of violence are undoubtedly an evidence.'³² Gandhi had formed a Satyagraha Sabha to oppose the Rowlatt Bills and toured various parts of the country to arouse the conscience of the people against the government. He appealed that 6 April 1919 be observed as a day of humiliation and

prayer in protest against the repressive law. The Muslims responded and participated in the hartal. In the cities and larger towns Muslim artisans took part.³³

Abdul Bari held passive resistance to be in accordance with Islamic principles and urged Muslims to support it because the Rowlatt Bills 'were intended to enable the government to coerce the Mohammadans and prevent them from giving trouble so as to facilitate the dismemberment of Turkey'.³⁴ Thus Gandhi, by espousing the cause of the Khilafat, was extending support to the Khilafatists and was also getting Muslim support for his national campaign against the government. This should be viewed as an attempt to provide a new dimension to the national movement. Gandhi believed that communal harmony was a precondition for the attainment of swaraj. He, therefore, was very keen to involve the Muslim leaders — the purest and most patriotic representatives of the community — in the national movement.³⁵

Gandhi had had sufficient experience of working with Muslims in South Africa, where he found himself, in effect, a Muslim leader.³⁶ Right from early 1916, he had been endeavouring to cultivate and win over the Muslims by supporting the demand for the release of leaders like Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali who had been interned by the government. He had met Abdul Bari in 1916 at the Lucknow Congress session. He was one with Gandhi in demanding the release of the Ali brothers. Gandhi's circle of Muslim friends widened when he met Dr Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan. In securing Muslim friendship, Gandhi's objective was to obtain justice in the face of heavy odds through the method of satyagraha; to achieve internal peace through Hindu-Muslim unity; and transform ill-will into affection for the British and their Constitution.³⁷ The Director of the Intelligence Bureau in 1919 reported:

In March last an understanding was arranged between Mr M.K. Gandhi and Maulana Abdul Bari to the effect that the Hindu politicians would espouse the cause of Turkey and Muhammadans would refrain from slaughtering kins. Whilst the Hindu politicians have kept their word and Mr Gandhi and his fellow workers have done much to excite Muhammadans in the matter of ultimate fate of the Turkish Empire, the Muhammadans have not refrained from killing kins both for food and for sacrifice. Maulana Abdul Bari has doubtless tried his best to bring round his co-religionists to his views, but his success has not been at all great or even fair. . . . It may be added that the Hindu-Mohammedan combination of the kind effected by Messers Gandhi and Abdul Bari is dominated by a most mischievous anti-British spirit.³⁸

Gandhi's support to the cause of Khilafat and his faith in the leadership of Abdul Bari, the Ali brothers, Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan

are important features of his anti-colonial struggle during 1919-22. Gandhi did feel that the Khilafat question was the greatest of all for it affected the religious susceptibilities of millions of Muslims. He was also confident that the sense of 'Khilafat wrong' would bring the Muslim community into the larger struggle of freedom.³⁹ This was already witnessed during the Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant and Tilak and in the Rowlatt Satyagraha. But it would be wrong to assume that Gandhi was completely subservient to the Muslim leadership of the Khilafat agitation. In fact, Gandhi played a very significant role in directing the movement, in evolving the strategy of mobilizing the people, and in combining the liberal and extremist methods of political action. No other leader could have been as effective as Gandhi.

The Khilafat agitation was launched from the platforms of the Congress and the Muslim League in 1918 but was conducted thereafter through Khilafat Committees. The first Khilafat Committee was formed in March 1919 in Bombay. A few months later, in Madras, a Khilafat Committee was established by Abdul Majid Sharar. In the same year, Akram Khan and Daud Ghazanavi formed Khilafat Committees in Calcutta and Amritsar respectively. In many important cities of the United Provinces, too, Khilafat Committees started functioning.⁴⁰ The ulema and the Western-educated Muslim leaders were active in mobilizing rural and urban Muslims to support the Khilafat movement. They held meetings and launched massive press campaign to arouse the Muslims against the British Government which aimed at the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire and thus offending the religious feelings of the community. Rumours regarding the Turkish peace terms was 'a signal for an outburst of Muhammedan feeling . . . which found expression in the Press and on the platform. . . . At no time, however, was there any serious indications of Bolshevism carrying much weight with Muslim opinion in India.'⁴¹ Gandhi's involvement made the Khilafat Movement an organic limb of the national movement. Thus a movement which was essentially concerned with a religious question of the Muslims, gained the general support of the Hindus and gained the character of a national movement.

Gandhi attended the All-India Muslim Conference on 21 September 1919 in Lucknow. In that conference a resolution was passed that, on 17 October 1919, Khilafat Day should be observed all over the country. Gandhi appealed to the Hindus to join the Muslims in fasting, prayer and hartal. Gandhi did so

because he wanted to test the strength of Muslim feelings over the Khilafat, and the extent to which they were prepared for a confrontation with the Government. At the same time, he wanted to assess the Hindu response to

the Khilafat cause which was important for the success of the Khilafat movement as well as for the future of Hindu-Muslim unity.⁴²

Gandhi and his Muslim followers knew that 'the feelings excited both by the Khilafat question and the Punjab disturbances were serving to further their own Home Rule campaign for which the hatred of the British Government by the masses was essential.'⁴³

After March 1919, as mentioned above, a number of Khilafat Committees sprang up in various towns and cities of the country. In November 1919, the title of the Khilafat Committee was changed to 'The Central Khilafat Committee of India, Bombay'. The aims and objects of this organization were:

1. To secure for Turkey a just and honourable peace.
2. To secure the fulfilment of the pledges given by the Right Honourable Mr Lloyd George in his speech of 5 January 1918 and to preserve the integrity of the Turkish Empire.
3. With a view to securing the above objects, to memorialise the British Ministers, H.E. the Viceroy and, if necessary, the President of the United States of America.⁴⁴

In November 1919 an All-India Khilafat Conference was convened at Delhi by Ajmal Khan. It was presided over by Fazlul Haq of Calcutta. It was attended by Gandhi and Swami Shraddhanand. The speeches in the conference indicated a strong anti-British feeling. Resolutions were passed to boycott the peace celebrations, to boycott British goods, to send a deputation to England and, if necessary to America, and to refuse to co-operate with the government unless the Khilafat and the Holy Places were treated in accordance with Muslim desires. A sub-committee was appointed consisting of Syud Hossain, Fazlul Haq, Abdul Bari, Ajmal Khan and others to examine the question of non-cooperation further and to propose effective action.

It should be noted that the resolutions in this conference betrayed lack of unanimity. Gandhi and the liberal leaders of the Khilafat Conference did not favour the resolution on boycotting British goods as it would encounter opposition from the Hindu and Muslim merchants since it meant 'an economic punishment'⁴⁵ for them. This view was supported by the Central Khilafat Committee meeting at Bombay. It was attended by M.M. Chotani, B.A. Koor, A.H.S. Khatri, Abu Yusuf Isphani and others. It pointed out in clear terms that the suggestion to the effect that British goods should be boycotted and that the Muslims should refuse to co-operate with government was neither feasible nor workable. The Honorary Secretaries of the Central Khilafat Committee, Bombay, in a letter (dated 24 December 1919) to the Chairman of the Khilafat Committee at Amritsar wrote: (1) The boycott cannot succeed even if our Hindu

brethren join us wholeheartedly in the movement. (2) More than 76 per cent of the Bombay Mussalman merchants have dealings in English goods and if the boycott is enforced it would spell ruin to them all, and we believe that they will not agree with boycott. Thus, there will be split which is most undesirable at this juncture. (3) The costs of the Indian goods made to replace the goods boycotted would increase to such an extent as to make it impossible for the poorer classes, including the lower middle class, to purchase such goods instead and they would be deprived of some of the necessities of life. It will take years to bring down sufficient machinery and build a sufficient number of mills to produce cotton goods of the quality and quantity requisite in India. Labour difficulties will also arise. (4) Our experience shows that boycott has not succeeded in the past. Take the case of the boycott of Italian goods when Italy went to war against Turkey. It failed miserably and if that boycott could not sustain, *a fortiori*, a boycott of English goods will not succeed.⁴⁶ Gandhi approved of the Khilafat Committee's standpoint.

The ulema led by Abdul Bari and Kifayatullah did not agree with this approach. They believed that it was their responsibility to guide the community in political and non-political matters from a religious point of view. After all, they were the custodians of the Islamic way of life and defenders of national rights of the Muslims. Abdul Bari and Kifayatullah took the initiative to establish the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind to unify the divided body of ulema with a view to act as spiritual guides of the community. On 25 November 1919 a meeting of the ulema was held, presided over by Abdul Bari. It was claimed that the Jamiat would promote Muslim unity, protect Islam and centres of Islam, strive for complete independence of the country, organize the ulema on a common platform, cultivate good and friendly relations with the non-Muslims and establish religious courts (*Mahakim-i-Shariat*) to meet the religious needs of the community.⁴⁷

The release of the Ali brothers towards the end of December and of Maulana Azad in January 1920 added new vigour to the Khilafat agitation. The Ali brothers attended the Amritsar session of the Indian National Congress. The All-India Khilafat Conference, held at Amritsar after the conclusion of the Congress session, decided to send a deputation consisting of Hindu and Muslim leaders to the viceroy.

The Muslim League session was also held at Amritsar in 1919. Its president was Ajmal Khan. The session was also addressed by the Ali brothers. They made spirited speeches urging that they would sacrifice their life and property for the protection of Kaaba. Shaukat Ali stated that if jihad was proclaimed by the Khalifa, no Muslim could refuse to obey the summons. He asked the Muslims whether they wished to remain British subjects or Muslims, and if they chose to be British

subjects he would sever his connection with them and seek martyrdom. One of the resolutions passed in the Muslim League session prohibited the slaughter of cows on the occasion of the Bakr Id. In another resolution, it was stated that the Indian Muslims would be justified in resorting to all possible methods of constitutional agitation. An amendment was proposed to this resolution by Hasrat Mohani to add the words, 'including the boycott of the Indian Army if it is likely to be used outside India for imperial and anti-Islamic purposes', was also passed.⁴⁸

The Congress and Muslim League sessions were followed by a Provincial Khilafat Conference at Hyderabad, Sind, on 4 and 5 January 1920. One speaker declared that the British were the bitterest enemies of Islam and that, if the decision with respect to Turkey was not satisfactory, Muslims would be compelled to obey the Quran and declare jihad. Another speaker stated that the British atrocities at Amritsar taught him that it was better to die than to live if the holy places of Mesopotamia are in the hands of the Kafirs.⁴⁹

On 19 January 1920, a deputation of 35 persons waited on the viceroy to place before him their views on the Khilafat question and to ask for his sympathetic assistance not only in conveying those views to the Paris Peace Conference, but also in facilitating the despatch to England of a deputation.⁵⁰ The Third All-India Khilafat Conference was held in Bombay on 15-17 February 1920. In the meeting of the Subjects Committee two important questions, viz., the boycott of British goods and service in the army, were discussed. Abdul Bari and Azad Subhani held that not only was the boycott of British goods imperative but also rejection of service in the army, for an army composed of Muslim soldiers could well be used against Muslim countries. This was *haram* or prohibited by religion. Mr Manley in his note gave an account of the proceedings of the Subjects Committee:

When M.K. Azad, a liberal Bombay Barrister, pointed out an illegality in such a course, he was told that in a matter of the kind the religious law must prevail. Similarly Mirza Ali Mahomed Khan, a Shia Bombay Solicitor, placed on the table the Indian Penal Code and other war legislation and began to explain the law in much the same way as Azad had done. At this point one Noor Mohammed of Hyderabad, Sind, placing the Quran on the table beside the law books, asked the committee to choose between the two. This blunt presentation of alternatives settled the matter at once in favour of the extremists. From this point onwards the term Jihad was frequently used.⁵¹

Besides Gandhi, Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari, Fazlul Haq and Fazl-i-Hussain did not attend the Khilafat Conference of February 1920.

The Calcutta Provincial Khilafat Conference held on 28 and 29 February 1920 was another landmark in the intensification of the agitation. It registered the supremacy of the leadership of the extremist ulema over the movement. Abdul Bari's violent speech on the second day was an important feature of the conference. He said that the Holy Book urged that

The Mussalmans should never hope for friendship with Jews and Christians. . . . Each Mohammadan should become a Saladin to check the flood of non-Muslims encroaching on the territories of Muslims. They must be ready to give up their lives if necessary. . . . The enemies of Islam were four crores and they were seven crores [the population in England and the Muslim population in India?]. Should they have to fight against them, they, the Muhammedans, had no guns or canon but they will have to try to injure them even by throwing bricks. Even if each Muhammedan were to throw a handful of dust at them they would be buried under the heap that would be raised. . . . If the Peace Terms were unsatisfactory from that time, God had made every kind of retaliation legal from them. They could sacrifice every Christian life and property and still get *Fatwa* [i.e. religious sanction] and they would not have sinned before God, as Christians had burnt the Muslim's heart. . . . If he could get at his disposal canon and guns he would have preferred to declare war and burn Christians, having saturated them with kerosine oil.⁵²

The resolutions passed at the conference included a call for suspension of work on 19 March; resignation by every Muslim serving in the Indian Army if their religion is endangered; an appeal for the cooperation of the Hindus; a call for boycott of the British goods; and approval of the movements of Mustafa Kemal and Envar Pasha and other Turkish patriots.⁵³

The Calcutta session was presided over by Maulana A.K. Azad. He delivered a very comprehensive and theoretical address spelling out the fundamental features of the Khilafat and its relevance to modern times. In fact this was the first systematic theoretical attempt in this direction. He borrowed much from Afghani but deviated from him in elaborating the significance of the Khilafat movement. He argued that the history of societal organization bears out the continuous conflict and struggle between the centralizing and chaotic or divisive forces. In the Muslim organization or society, the authority to provide centralized direction rests with the prophet and his caliphs. With the Umayyad rule and thereafter the centralization came to be expressed not in religious terms but in the form of a monarchical universal Khilafat. But it continued to remain a legal authority and a political centre of the Muslim world. It is the duty of every Muslim to owe allegiance to the Khalifa and one who does not submit to him ceases to be a part of the community. On this

point there is no difference between the Sunnis and the Shias. It is obligatory on the part of every Muslim to defend the Khilafat by means of jihad which does not necessarily mean violence. Abolition of Khilafat would lead to chaos in the Islamic world.

Azad also suggested the necessity to struggle against the British who will allow one to pray but who will not permit one to uphold Khilafat, which is also a religious duty. The religious neutrality of the British is a fiction. He also said that those non-Muslims who do not invade Muslim lands and threaten Islam must be trusted and befriended. The Muslims must be united and disciplined and should join hands with the Hindus in their struggle against the British for the protection of Khilafat.^{53a}

In February 1920 a Muslim delegation sailed for Europe. It consisted of Mohamed Ali, Syud Hossain, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi and Abul Kasim. The delegation did not register much success. Lloyd George made it clear that he would treat Turkey on a par with other defeated powers. Liberal Party leaders, like Lord Asquith, could not be persuaded to respect Muslim feelings on the question of Turkey.

In March 1920, the Khilafat Conference was held at Kanpur. It confirmed and re-asserted the decisions taken at the Calcutta Provincial Khilafat Conference. The Kanpur conference decided to boycott the coming elections and support the principles of 'complete independence'. 19 March 1921 was observed as Khilafat Day throughout the country. Hartal, fasting and prayer, and large public meetings, not only in the big cities but also in the mofussil, were the general features of the observances. At many places the suspension of work was singularly complete and successful. In Bombay the mills were closed and shops were shut.⁵⁴

On 11 April 1920, the All-India Khilafat Committee called a meeting at Bombay to decide between the Shariat and the Penal Code in order to chalk out future policy. The committee passed a resolution to the effect that a Second Khilafat Delegation be sent to Europe. It was also decided that no action other than propaganda should be taken for the present. When further action should become necessary, it should take the form of withdrawal of co-operation with the government, step by step, in the order shown in the following plan which was drawn by a special committee of which Gandhi was the principal member:

1. All government-awarded titles and honours to be relinquished.
2. Resignations by members of Councils.
3. Private servants of officials to give up their jobs.
4. Resignation of subordinate government servants including the police.
5. Resignation of superior government servants.

6. Withdrawal of Muslims from the army.
7. Refusal to pay taxes.⁵⁵

The plan of action was drafted by Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad. There was no mention of boycott in it nor of jihad. Even language which smacked of 'disloyalty' was avoided. The champions of violence were side-tracked. The plan of action nevertheless had its dangerous features and if attempts were made to carry it out in its entirety, there was sure to be trouble.⁵⁶ The Bombay merchants did exercise a moderating influence.

Bhurgri and Mirza A.M. Khan and others had constantly been pressing for a constitutional agitation if the Muslims were not to be recklessly driven to disaster. But the Khilafat committees were not under the sway of liberal and moderate influence. They accepted non-cooperation but they wanted something more.⁵⁷ In the Sehwan Khilafat conference held on 16 and 17 April 1920, Maulvi Taj Muhammed of Amraoti moved the resolution that 'having regard to present circumstances and to the orders in our religious books, it is our duty to do *Hijrat*'. The question of *hijrat* was debated by many speakers. Jan Muhammed Junejo, Bar-at-law, said that both *jihad* and *hijrat* were difficult. Jihad was their duty; but what could they do against a government which prohibited them even from carrying sticks. *Hijrat* too was easier proclaimed than carried out; where could seven crores Muhammedans go? Afghanistan could not support so many people; Arabia was in the hands of a rebel; Turkey too was impossible. In case they went, what would happen to their mosques and the burial grounds? Who was going to look after them? It was suggested that the Hindu brethren would be requested to take over those places. Aminuddin N. Munshi from Hyderabad raised the question of lands. His fear was that the 'benign' British Government would take the advantage of the situation and hand them over to their brethren from England. Hakim Fateh Mohammed of Karachi said 'leave this country by closing your eyes'.⁵⁸

On the occasion of his father's death anniversary, the Amir of Afghanistan decided that Afghanistan with its extension and capacity was heartily prepared to cordially welcome such emigrants as were determined to do *hijrat* in the way of Allah inasmuch as the question is a religious one.⁵⁹ Abdul Bari also issued a *fatwa* to those Muslims who could not pacify their conscience that they should now act according to the dictates of Islam and should migrate to some such country where it would be possible for them to serve Islam and act according to its tenets in an easier and better way.⁶⁰

The Turkish peace terms which were published on 14 May 1920 came as a disappointment to the Indian Muslim community. Their worst fears

had proved justified, the terms were 'extremely heart rending'. They were denounced by all the Khilafat leaders and by Gandhi. Meetings of Khilafat Committees were held in different parts of the country and the people were told to practice effective non-cooperation.⁶¹ In the Oudh Khilafat Conference at Fyzabad speeches were made which, in effect, extended invitations to foreign invaders and welcomed even Bolshevism.⁶² In May 1920, the Central Khilafat Committee issued a manifesto advising Indians not to help a government which perpetrated and upheld wrong and injustice. It asked for the withdrawal of co-operation from the government till the Khilafat wrongs were redressed.

The Central Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad on 1-3 June 1920 to decide its course of action in consultation with the Hindu leaders. The Hindu leaders, with the exception of Gandhi, were not prepared to support the extremist measures incorporated in the non-cooperation plan. On 2 June, Hasrat Mohani said that he was ready to join any Afghan army which might invade India to drive the British out. He was supported by Shaukat Ali, Zafar Ali Khan and Azad Subhani. The Hindu leaders not only disapproved of this but reacted strongly against it. On the last day of the meeting, in deference to Gandhi's wishes, the non-cooperation resolution was passed. On 22 June a memorial signed by the Khilafat leaders was sent by Gandhi to the viceroy who was requested to urge the British Cabinet to revise the peace terms, failing which they would start non-cooperation with effect from 1 August 1920. In the middle of the year, thousands of Muslim families in wild enthusiasm made a clearance sale of their property and migrated to Afghanistan only to be confronted with insuperable odds and hardships. The *hijrat* was a nightmare for the *muhajirin*.

The non-cooperation programme was accompanied by vigorous press propaganda. Gandhi and other Khilafat leaders visited many cities and towns and delivered rousing speeches. Non-cooperation was described as a part of jihad which would sap the strength of the enemy. Hindu-Muslim unity was preached as an essential source of strength in fighting the British enemy. The inhuman massacre of Jallianwala Bagh had exposed the British as the enemy of Hindus as well as Muslims. A Special Session of the Congress was held in September in Calcutta which accepted the non-cooperation programme. The decision was confirmed by the Nagpur Congress Session in 1920. In November 1920, about 500 ulema signed a *Muttafiqa fatwa*⁶³ making non-cooperation a duty and declared it lawful to join hands with the Hindus under the leadership of Gandhi.

The Khilafat-cum-Non-cooperation Movement received support from large sections of Indian society. The ulema of different shades, the Western-educated Khilafat leaders and Gandhi took the movement to

the very interior of the country. Of course the involvement of the Muslims was greater than of the others since they looked upon non-cooperation not as a matter of politics but a matter of religion.⁶⁴ Gandhi had already made non-cooperation a part of the protest against the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs. Now the question of swaraj along with Khilafat was brought into prominence in the Khilafat Committee meetings. Gandhi told the Lucknow Khilafat Conference of February 1921 that the success of the Khilafat movement meant swaraj.⁶⁵ It was not that the Khilafat Committees had lost interest in Turkey and in the revision of the humiliating peace terms. The Sind Khilafat Committee, Karachi, declared (on 21 February 1921) that the Khilafat and allied matters must be settled in keeping with Islamic law. This was repeated at the Ajmer Khilafat Conference of 13-14 March 1921. In the Bareilly Khilafat Conference Abul Kalam Azad said that the complete independence of the country was necessary for the integrity of the Islamic Shariat. The idea of the establishment of *Dar ul Qaza* (House of Justice) was also mooted.⁶⁶

On 7-10 April 1921, the All-India Khilafat Conference assembled at Meerut. One of the resolutions passed stated that the Muslims were bound to adhere to non-cooperation until swaraj was won. They were also requested to join the Congress. What is to be noted about this conference is that some ulema raised objections against the programme of Hindu-Muslim unity on religious grounds and demanded that its scope be defined according to the Shariat.⁶⁷

In the District Khilafat Conference (held on 19 June 1921) at Belgaum, which was attended by Mohamed Ali, it was resolved that an Indian Republic should be declared in consultation with the Indian National Congress, if Great Britain, directly or through the Greeks, fought the Turkish Government at Angora.⁶⁸ In the All India Khilafat Conference at Karachi (July 1921) the Khilafat leaders held out a threat that if Britain waged war against Turkey, the Muslims would be compelled to launch a civil disobedience movement and also declare India an Independent Republic at the next session of Congress at Ahmedabad.⁶⁹

The Khilafat agitation received a jolt with the outbreak of the Moplah rebellion in Malabar. It was marred by acts of violence and retaliation between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The government considered that it was the fanaticism of the Muslims and the religious orientation of the Khilafat movement that was responsible for the Moplah uprising against the Hindu landlords.

It would be wrong to believe that the Khilafat movement was the sole cause of the rebellion. The Moplahs constituted an 'oppressed and poverty-stricken peasantry'; their suffering was aggravated by rising poverty, a significant increase in population, the return of demobbed soldiers, and severe economic depression in the country. The food riots

in 1918, and the setting up of tenancy agitation committees produced a new kind of awareness and unrest in the Malabar region. It is interesting that the rebellion was confined to South Malabar. Where there was a concentration of Muslim businessmen, as in Calicut, and where there were some Muslim landlords, as in North Malabar, the rebellion was conspicuous by its absence.⁷⁰

The Moplahs were attracted to the Khilafat movement after the Manjeri Conference of the Kerala Congress in April 1920. By 30 June 1921, over 200 Khilafat Committees had been established, the leaders of which were both Hindus and Muslims. In August 1920 Gandhi and Shaukat Ali visited Calicut and addressed a large meeting. The British administration was not indifferent to these developments. It proscribed Khilafat preaching and the distribution of literature and banned public meetings to be addressed by the Khilafat leaders.⁷¹

The rebellion started on 20 August 1921. There was a rumour that a mosque in Tuirangadi had been destroyed by the police. The Moplahs attacked the symbols of British authority like government offices, courts, post offices, sub-treasuries, banks and police stations and resorted to guerilla warfare. They also murdered Hindus and looted and burned the houses of Hindu landlords. Some Hindu temples were also destroyed. The civil authority collapsed and martial law was proclaimed.⁷² The British followed an extremely repressive policy. The most heinous episode was the 'train tragedy' of 19 November 1921, when 122 Moplah prisoners were loaded into a goods train for transportation and the wagons were sealed. When opened, 64 of the prisoners were found to have died of suffocation.

The Madras Government had the satisfaction that the rebellion had served a useful purpose, inasmuch as it opened the eyes of the 'saner elements' to the disaster to which Khilafat and non-cooperation movements would lead.⁷³ Hindu leaders, like B.S. Moonje, firmly believed that, behind the Moplah rebellion, was Muslim fanaticism which was exploited by the Pan-Islamists to incite Muslims against the Hindus.⁷⁴

In September 1921 the Ali brothers, Dr Kitchlew, Maulana Husain Ahmed, Pir Ghulam Majaddid, Maulana Nisar Ahmed and others were arrested on charges of sedition and tampering with the loyalty of troops and then convicted at Karachi. At the meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee of 21-22 September, held in Delhi, the arrest of the Ali brothers, the proscription of the ulema's *Muttafiqa fatwa*, and assistance to Angora were the chief subjects for discussion. The extremist section held that Muslims did not have any alternative except to resort to civil disobedience. However, Ajmal Khan and A.K. Azad persuaded the committee that the Muslims alone could not take the decision. It would require the support of Gandhi and the Congress. Consequently the

decision was postponed. The Central Khilafat Committee meeting at Bombay (9-10 October) was followed by the Provincial Khilafat Committee meeting at Agra on 25 and 26 October. It was presided over by Maulana Azad.

Azad's presidential address was as significant as his previous address to the Calcutta Khilafat Conference of 1920. At Calcutta he expounded the political theory behind the Khilafat movement; at Agra he elaborated the political philosophy of united nationhood and proclaimed the object of the Khilafat as *swaraj*. He said that the first stage and the first success of the Khilafat movement was that it was not the problem of one community (*jamat*) but the problem of the whole country. It had won the support of the non-Muslims and the Khilafat question, in effect, had become an Indian national question. Such an impressive result had never been achieved during forty years of struggle. It went to the credit of Gandhi, Azad said, who converted the religious problem of the Muslim community into a national problem of all communities in the country, especially of the Hindus and Muslims. The achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity was the great contribution of the Khilafat movement. This was based on the Quranic injunction which lays down that there are two kinds of non-Muslims: those who attack Muslim religion and property, and those who are not inimical to Islam and the Muslims. In the first category are the British; in the second are the Hindus with whom friendship and co-operation was required by Quranic mandate. Therefore, co-operation with the British, in any form, is *kufr* and the assertion of united nationhood is a duty enjoined by the Quran. The prophet, on the basis of the same principle united the different tribes of Madina and formed one nation.⁷⁵

In December 1921, the All India Khilafat Conference met at Ahmedabad with Ajmal Khan as its president. A resolution to declare 'independence without foreign control' was passed. It is interesting to note that a similar resolution in favour of 'complete independence' was rejected both by the Congress and Muslim League. In the Congress Subjects Committee and in the open session, Hasrat Mohani's resolution was opposed by Gandhi himself. In the Muslim League session, Ajmal Khan saw to it that the resolution was not passed. The Khilafat Conference called upon the Muslims of and above the age of 18 to forthwith join the Khilafat volunteer corps and to carry out duties pertaining to religion and country jointly with the National Volunteer Corps and prepare themselves for going to jail and to suffer other punishment. Another resolution stated that, for the success of the Khilafat cause, and for the achievement of *swaraj* for the country and justice for the Punjab, the Central Khilafat Committee would issue instructions from time to time regarding civil disobedience. Instructions to hold public and private

meetings in defiance of prohibitory orders were to be issued and civil disobedience would be launched simultaneously if the Provincial and Central Khilafat Committees were satisfied that there would be no likelihood of breach of peace.⁷⁶

The tone of the resolutions of this conference was militant beyond doubt and the readiness to sacrifice life and property was much more evident here than in any of the previous meetings of the Khilafat Committees. In his presidential address to the Fourteenth All India Muslim League Session, Maulana Hasrat Mohani pleaded that, from the Muslim point of view, it is not enough to stand for complete independence alone, it was necessary also to decide upon the form that independence should take. In his opinion it could only be an Indian Republic on the lines of a United States of India. Apart from the benefits which Muslims would share with their Hindu brothers as common and equal citizens, Mohani argued that with every decline in the prestige and power of the British Empire, which was the worst enemy of Muslim countries, the Muslims would get breathing time and an opportunity to improve their lot. Mohani further added, on the question of non-violence, that if martial law was declared, non-violent non-cooperation would be a totally insufficient and ineffective answer. The only proper reply to martial law would be, according to him, what is commonly called guerilla warfare.⁷⁷

While the Khilafat leaders were certainly concerned to do all they could for Turkey, in the beginning of 1922 they were above all completely committed to the attainment of swaraj, i.e. complete independence, for the country. Their faith in non-violent non-cooperation was strong and, with this in view, preparations were being made to start a campaign of civil disobedience. In the United Provinces many instances of a strong and open spirit of defiance of British authority could be noticed. Self-mobilization and organization within and without the framework of the established political parties, were creating 'problems of law and order'.⁷⁸

A manifesto was issued by Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari, M.M. Chotani, Dr Syed Mahmud and A.H.S. Khatri declaring that it was the duty of the Indian Muslims to make their voices heard and to warn the Powers that only the complete acceptance of the Khilafat demands by the nations of Europe would satisfy the Islamic people of Asia and Africa. To achieve this, they were asked to 'fill the gaols of British India when our Director Mahatma Gandhi bids us'; and to preserve non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity at all costs because success depended on it.⁷⁹ This was confirmed by the Central Khilafat Committee meeting held in Bombay on 12-13 January 1922.

The call was taken up instantly and agitation spread everywhere.

Violence erupted on 5 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura where a few policemen were killed by a mob. The details of the 'tragedy' showed that it was 'a striking example of leadership by illiterate peasants from the bottom of the social hierarchy, and autonomous mobilization of the masses for anti-British agitation'.⁸⁰ On account of this incident, Gandhi called off the Non-cooperation Movement and asked the people to concentrate on his constructive programme. In March 1922, he was arrested.

The decision to suspend the movement was most unexpected and was a disappointment to the Khilafat as well as the Congress leaders but they had to abide by Gandhi's decision. The All India Khilafat Conference which met at Delhi on 25-26 February 1922 gave the matter further consideration and resolved to continue the non-violent non-cooperation movement for the attainment of the Khilafat demands. It also advised the Muslims to work under the Congress organization in all matters concerning the larger interests of the country, so that there should be no discord in the national movement. At the same time it felt it was necessary to ensure that the Khilafat movement would not stop on account of Congress resolutions which were not relevant to it (such as the Bardoli resolution). There should also be no danger of a split between Congress and Khilafat workers and between Hindus and Muslims in general. The following lines of action were agreed upon:

1. Collection of an Angora fund.
2. Enlistment of Khilafat workers.
3. Boycott of British goods.
4. Establishment of relations with Muslims of other countries and working for unity.
5. The revival, if possible, of *hijrat* after consulting Mustafa Kemal Pasha and after proper organization and full consideration of facilities and difficulties.⁸¹

This showed that the Central Khilafat Committee leaders wanted to demarcate the area of action between the committee and the Congress Party. There was also an effort not to antagonize Gandhi and other Hindu leaders. But there was no wavering and vacillation on the question of continuing the agitation for attaining Khilafat demands. The approach of the Delhi Khilafat Conference was reinforced by the Central Khilafat Working Committee at Bombay which met on 26-27 March 1922. The issue of starting civil disobedience was discussed in the joint committee meeting of the working committee of the Jammiat-ul-Ulema and Central Khilafat Committee as well as in the Central Khilafat Committee meeting at Lucknow on 7-9 June 1922. A majority of the members were in favour of retaliation against the oppressive acts of the government, but Ajmal Khan pleaded that, without involving the Congress, no

such decision could be taken. In the absence of Gandhi this dilemma continued and confusion persisted. But the real blow to the Khilafat agitation was Mustafa Kemal's decision, after his brilliant victory over the Greeks, to depose the Sultan of Turkey and to separate the temporal power of the Khalifa from his spiritual authority. In 1924, the Turkish National Government abolished the institution of Khilafat.

The period 1919-22 was marked by the rise and ascendancy of Gandhi in Indian politics. He also became the unquestioned leader of the Indian National Congress. Simultaneously, these years witnessed the growth of the influence of the ulema in the country and especially in the Muslim community. The religious nature of the Khilafat question and Gandhi's championship of the issue added a radically different dimension to the national struggle of the Indian people. The net effect was an upsurge of anti-colonialism, an unprecedented degree of Hindu-Muslim unity and Muslim association with the Congress organization.

The growth of Pan-Islamic tendencies, particularly after 1912, and the Khilafat 'wrong' naturally made the ulema prominent in the post-war years. The new generation of the Muslim community, in spite of its Western education, believed in seeking the support of religion and the ulema for attaining political and secular objectives. But there was a catch here. The ulema were not aware of the exigencies of politics. Their outlook and approach was not in keeping with the demands of modern times. Hence they could not be permanent allies in the pursuit of secular political goals. They could be most effective in mobilizing the illiterate Muslim masses but the religious idiom that they employed had its limitations. Delivering religious sermons, issuing *fatwas*, seeking inspiration from past Islamic history, and invoking the Quran and Hadith for justifying every decision was their standard technique. They aroused religious passions but were unable to help in creating secular political awareness. The effects of this could be seen especially on the communal situation all over the country and over the events that followed 1922-23.

Impatience and extremism were inherent in the political approach of the ulema. They had no patience for moderate opinion and liberal politics. The decisions of the All India Khilafat Conference in Delhi (1919) could be instanced here. They did not heed the advice of Gandhi in matters of the boycott of British goods and withdrawal of co-operation from the government. The Bombay liberals and the Muslim merchants protested but in vain. In the same way, the ulema imposed their decisions regarding boycott etc. not only on the Muslim liberals but also on Gandhi. His counsel of restraint was ignored.⁸² On the question of service in the police force and the army, the ulema silenced the liberals by stating that Islam has made it mandatory on the Muslims.⁸³ They

favoured the adoption of extra-constitutional methods for achieving the Khilafat goal.⁸⁴ The ulema were hasty and impulsive in their decision to undertake *hijrat*. Neither Gandhi nor the other Muslim leaders approved of it. It brought great disaster to many Muslim families. No attempt was made to understand the consequences of *hijrat*.⁸⁵

There were numerous occasions on which serious differences arose between the ulema and Gandhi regarding the methods to be used in the non-cooperation movement. The ulema were not at all happy with Gandhi's decision to suspend the movement. Abdul Bari said in the Ajmer Conference of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema in March 1923 that Mahatma Gandhi 'had exhausted all the items of his programme and no arrow was now left in his quiver. The Mussalmans would not remain silent like a woman but need some forward programme for the achievement of their aims . . . he was ready to commit violence by hand, teeth, and by all implements available.' Ansari was furious and called the Maulana a 'brainless, insincere and notoriety hunter.'⁸⁶ Gandhi met Bari and persuaded him to withdraw his statement and express faith in non-violence.

It is true that the ulema were aided and supported by leaders like Mohamed Ali, Shaukat Ali, Hasrat Mohani, Mushir Husain Kidwai and some regional leaders like Dr Nur Muhammed. For most of these, Abdul Bari was 'spiritual guide'. These leaders delivered fiery speeches and raised irrelevant issues like welcoming and co-operating with a foreign invader for driving the British out. The District Magistrate of Larkana, on 25 March 1920, wrote:

The worst feature is the prominence and power it [Khilafat agitation] gives to the Mullas — a venal and unscrupulous class of men — always eager to stir up troubles and excite bigotry and religious passions.

They have been spreading the most outrageous lies among the ignorant 'haris' [i.e. cultivators and labourers], as e.g. (1) that liquor is being openly drunk by the British in the shrines of Mecca and Madina, (2) that the British have stopped the ceremony of 'Tawaf' at Mecca, (3) that the Maulavis and Imams have been persecuted and driven away from Madina by the British, (4) that the Arab women of high birth have been tortured by the British army.⁸⁷

This kind of propaganda, launched by the ulema, was part of their antiquated and orthodox approach towards political problems. They had little to lose and much to gain through the hold and influence they were re-establishing over the Muslim masses, which they had been gradually losing in the past.⁸⁸

The Hindu leaders had their own apprehensions about certain measures which the Khilafat leaders adopted or contemplated. The narrow

and openly religious nature of the movement and its techniques made the whole agitation suspect in the eyes of the liberal Hindu leaders and led them to doubt how far this would help in broadening the social base of the national struggle. Of course, Gandhi, right from the beginning, wholeheartedly supported the ulema-dominated agitation. He exercised a great sobering effect and saw to it that the agitation remained non-violent. His advice was to be 'moderate' yet firm in demand.⁸⁹

B.G. Tilak was also sympathetically disposed towards the Khilafat question. The Ali brothers regarded him as their guru. His papers *Maharatta* and *Kesari*, upheld the cause of Khilafat.⁹⁰ The liberal Hindu leaders were not very enthusiastic about the Khilafat question. On 13 April 1920, Srinivasa Sastri wrote to Sivaswami Aiyar, 'the Khilafat movement would lead to disaster. I picture the Mohamedans breaking out here and there in futile demonstrations.'⁹¹ The right-oriented Hindu leaders felt that, because of the Khilafat agitation, the Congress would pass into the hands of Muslim leaders and its predominant Hindu influence would be lost.⁹² Some other Hindu leaders believed that Khilafat was a purely communal matter, having nothing to do with Indian nationalism.⁹³

A question may be asked as to why the entire Khilafat propaganda was conducted by the Khilafat Committees, independent of the Congress and the Muslim League. In this respect, the role of the latter organization was secondary. In fact, the growing nationalist feeling in India, particularly after 1916, was rendering the Moderates in the Congress and League quite ineffective. The Moderates had become, wrote Meston to the Viceroy, 'voiceless in public', had 'completely lost command of the press'.⁹⁴ The Liberals were not able to comprehend the significance and ethos of this 'new spirit'.⁹⁵ The Congress organization, still dominated by liberal philosophy, could not reconcile to the new technique which was evolved by Gandhi who took the Congress to the masses and succeeded in drawing hitherto voiceless sections of the population into its fold and converting them to the new Congress style of politics.⁹⁶ The Muslim League also could not be an appropriate body for the conduct of the Khilafat agitation. After all, the membership of the League in 1919 was only 777. After three years, it increased to 1097 and its income from subscription and donations was extremely meagre. Its leadership consisted of the titled gentry, nawabs, landlords and *jee huzoors* who were generally well meaning gentlemen but wanted to serve the Muslim cause only so far as it did not affect their position either socially or in government quarters.⁹⁷ They were all wedded to constitutional methods. Commenting on the nature of the Muslim League, Abdul Bari wrote to M.M. Chotani, on 9 January 1920:

You are well acquainted with the attitude of the members of the League. They never undertake any responsibility on their shoulder in taking up a difficult question, but only look to their own interests with a view to guard their prestige. They merely speak but do not care to see that good results are derived from their demands.⁹⁸

The Khilafat leaders also did not approve of the attitude of the leaders like Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan. Yakub Hasan wrote to Mohamed Ali on 29 January 1920:

Although Right Honourable Amir Ali and His Highness the Aga Khan have made representations to the authorities from time to time about Turkey, much still remains to be done there. You are aware that these two leaders are very timid. They always discourage agitation for fear of losing the sympathy of few Europeans who support the cause of Turkey not for the love of Muslims but only in the best interest of the British Empire itself.⁹⁹

The establishment of the Khilafat Committees was inevitable. The first Khilafat Committee was set up in March 1919 in Bombay at a public meeting, which was attended by 15,000 people. In July 1919, the Khilafat Committee resolved to start branches all over India, to hold meetings regularly in order to keep Muslims informed on Khilafat problems, and to translate Muslim feelings into effective pressure on the government.¹⁰⁰ The constitution of the Khilafat Committee stated that its objective was not only to preserve Khilafat institutions but also to attain self-government and organize Indian Muslims for religious, educational, social and economic advancement. The constitution also set up a network of Khilafat Committee branches, and outlined detailed procedures for electing executives, raising funds, recruiting volunteers, and electing delegates to the annual meetings.¹⁰¹

The working of the Khilafat Committees shows that they were quite effective not only in taking the Khilafat question to the people, both in urban and rural areas, but also in increasing the participation of the Muslims in the national struggle. The Khilafat Committee followed the liberal method of petitioning the government as well as methods of hartal, strike, demonstration and non-cooperation in a non-violent way.¹⁰²

This does not, however, mean that the Central Khilafat Committee exercised complete control over the provincial committees. Or that the thousands of the local Khilafat Committees cared to adhere to the discipline imposed by central or provincial Khilafat Committees. In a letter to the president of the Sind Provincial Khilafat Committee, 'a pleader' wrote on 22 April 1920 that there was a noticeable tendency to carry on the Khilafat work almost independently of the provincial

Khilafat Committee which had no control or influence on the various meetings in the province. It was, therefore, feared that thousands of people would be collecting *baitul mal* and no one would know where the money was going. There would be utter disorganization and it would not be easy to put the house in order.¹⁰³ One reason for this was that the Central Khilafat Committee did not lay down any definite programme. But the greater reason appeared to be that the people seized the initiative and began to act on their own. It was a sort of local and group self-mobilization where the people took whatever step they thought proper. Syed Muhammad Hussain, Secretary, Provincial Khilafat Committee, Meerut, wrote to M.M. Chotani, on 4 May 1920: 'You are aware that public spirit is getting more and more dangerous every day and nothing has been settled for future. People are doing what they choose. . . .'¹⁰⁴ Mushir Husain Kidwai's letter to Chotani, written on 4 May 1920, underlined the fact:

If the Central Khilafat Committee does not work with more readiness and with more regard for public opinion and public expectations for it, then undoubtedly there will spring up another class which will be more ready, practical and responsive to public desires [hearts] and I myself would have no excuse against joining it. Personally I do not wish to conceal that the C.K.C. [Central Khilafat Committee] does not take steps in the direction of practical work with the same readiness as it ought.¹⁰⁵

One instance was the anti-zamindars posture of the Khilafat agitation. Mention has been made of the Moplah rebellion in 1921. But this was not confined to South Malabar only. The feeling against the zamindars who oppressed the poor peasantry was quite widespread. A note written by the District Magistrate, Larkana, says: 'Some Zamindars came to me in a body a few days ago and said some of the Pirs had been telling their *murids* that it was lawful and right to kill them (zamindars) because they had become Kafirs by joining the Peace celebrations. . . .'¹⁰⁶ The Commissioner of Sind also felt in February 1920 that the Sindhi zamindars were under great pressure from the extremist elements. He further wrote that

it is, however, impossible to say what the further effect of the flood of wild speeches will be: the constant reference to the Bolshevist successes, the suggestion that the Bolshevists are allied with the Turks, and the stories of fighting on the frontier — the situation requires and is receiving the most careful consideration.¹⁰⁷

The civil Intelligence Officer, Karachi Brigade, reported on 1 April 1920 that the Khilafat extremists exhorted the people to refuse to pay taxes and to refuse to work for any zamindar who helped the government.¹⁰⁸

What were the gains of the Khilafat Non-cooperation Movement? The biggest was the communal harmony during 1919-22. The approaches of Gandhi and of the Khilafat leaders were identical. They believed that true understanding of religion would bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi always defended his participation in the Khilafat movement. 'Had I been a prophet and foreseen all that has happened, I should have still thrown myself into the Khilafat agitation.'¹⁰⁹ It was not possible 'to induce Mussalmans to take interest in Swaraj except in terms of the Khilafat'.¹¹⁰ The Khilafat leaders agreed with Gandhi that Hindu participation in the Khilafat movement and Muslim refusal to kill the cow would ensure harmony and unity between the two communities. The Khilafat leaders appealed to their co-religionists to abandon cow-killing but there was no consensus on this front from the ulema. On 31 January 1920, a deputation of the Muslims waited upon Abdul Bari to discuss his stand on cow-slaughter. He told them that he never asserted that cow-sacrifice was forbidden to good Muslims, but in view of the attitude Hindus had adopted over the Khilafat question, Muslims should respect their prejudices as far as possible and refrain from cow-slaughter whenever other animals could equally well be sacrificed.¹¹¹ In September 1923, the same Abdul Bari urged Muslims 'to sacrifice cows without regard for Hindu feelings. We are determined to non-cooperate with every enemy of Islam whether he is in Anatolia or Arabia or at Agra or Benaras.'¹¹² Thus the unity of the Khilafat days, as described by M.R. Jaykar (in a letter to Lajpat Rai on 8 September 1925) was 'artificial' and 'unreal';¹¹³ more formal than intimate. It was artificial because it did not spring from any concrete or tangible interests but was built on a foundation of 'religious sentimentalism'.¹¹⁴

What Gandhi said about the Khilafat movement is true: 'In spite of the present strained relations between the two communities, both have gained as a result of the movement. The awakening of the masses . . . is itself a tremendous gain.'¹¹⁵ But the developments in the next two decades showed that this mass awakening only served to reinforce communal solidarity. The Muslim concern for Turkey soon became a local concern for the problems of the Indian Muslims. In the middle of June 1922, Abdul Bari wrote to M.M. Chotani:

If money we are sending to the Turks were utilized for our requirements [in India] it would give us sufficient strength to be of some use to the Turks. . . . By means of non-cooperation we cannot prevent the Allies from giving help to the Greeks . . . so far no impression has been created on the Allies.

As far as I can make out the non-cooperation movement is dying down. Many people think the same thing. . . . Muslims' aloofness from the Congress would be even more harmful. Hindus will succeed in attaining Swaraj

and that Swaraj will not be in any way beneficial to us. . . . In my opinion it would be far more beneficial if the Muslims improve their own status, Indian Muslims in India, Arabs in Arabia, Afghans in Afghanistan, and Turks in Turkey. They should then unite. For the present whatever concessions could be obtained for the Turks, they should be obtained, but we should not ruin ourselves for their sake.¹¹⁶

The ulema ceased to carry much weight in Indian politics after 1922. They complained that they had been only made a catspaw by the educated Muslims and Gandhi who were now only too anxious to get rid of them.¹¹⁷ The secular politicians' break with the ulema was inevitable as their alliance rested on shaky foundations.¹¹⁸ But the ulema's participation in the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement paved the way for the subsequent growth of Muslim nationalism. By its emphasis on Islam, the movement made the Muslims conscious of their being Muslims and that too Muslims first and Indians afterwards.¹¹⁹ This was to prove the biggest blow to Hindu-Muslim unity. The active part that the ulema played in the Khilafat movement and their unceasing repetition of the religious idiom were powerful factors leading to the Hindu-Muslim divide.

The independent existence of the Khilafat Committee throughout the period 1919-22 should also be considered as a factor in separating the Muslims from the Congress organization and the national movement. This became evident after the abolition of the Khilafat by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Many prominent Khilafat leaders parted company with Gandhi. Subhas Chandra Bose held that this development was not due to any mistake on Gandhi's part:

The real mistake, in my opinion, did not lie in connecting the Khilafat issue with other national issues, but in allowing the Khilafat Committee to be set up as an independent organization throughout the country, quite apart from Indian National Congress. . . . If no separate Khilafat Committees had been organized and all the Khilafat Muslims had been persuaded to join the ranks of the Indian National Congress, they would probably have been absorbed by the latter when the Khilafat issue became a dead one.¹²⁰

3. The Return to Communal Politics

Gandhi's suspension of the non-cooperation movement and the abolition of the Khilafat by the Turks themselves created an awkward situation for the Indian Khilafat leaders. The ulema disintegrated and disappeared from politics. The Ali brothers left Gandhi and continued to be attached to the Central Khilafat Committee which had become an anachronism after the end of the Khilafat. A few Muslim leaders became active in the Muslim League. Dr Ansari and many Muslim leaders remained with Gandhi and the Congress. But Hakim Ajmal Khan and

many of the UP Muslim politicians felt that a change was essential in the Congress policy, particularly regarding council entry. These leaders joined the Swaraj Party — 'a party within Congress' — formed by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru (Khaliquzzaman and T.A.K. Sherwani were its additional secretaries). Council entry was a major issue which divided the Congressmen into 'changers' and 'no-changers'.

But an equally important issue which agitated the minds of Congressmen was the increasing incidence of the communal violence throughout the country. It also divided the Congressmen along communal lines. The Hindu Mahasabha was founded by the end of 1922 with which were associated men like Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya. *Shuddhi* and *sanghatan* movements were also started in 1923. They were accompanied by the movements of *tabligh* and *tanzeem*. The Hindu-Muslim unity of the Khilafat days was being replaced by communal polarization. The Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements were being analysed in terms of the gains and losses of the Hindus and of the Muslims. Communal harmony was discredited as mere claptrap.¹²¹ The talk of 'crystallising Hindu public opinion' and uniting all Hindus for shaping the destiny of Hindu nation¹²² became quite frequent. Muslim leaders began to express anxiety for the defence of the 'Muslim interests', and as a result the relations between the communities were so greatly 'strained that each community had practically arrayed itself in an armed camp against each other.'¹²³

This was not only true in Punjab in early 1923 but also in other parts of the country. Many important cities and towns were the scenes of communal riots. They included Ajmer, Meerut, Saharanpur, Agra, Palwal, Multan, Amritsar, Moradabad, Allahabad, Panipat, Gonda, Jabalpur, Rai Bareilly, Hapur, Delhi, Lahore, Lucknow, Bhagalpur, Nagpur, Shahajahanpur and Kohat. It was officially stated that during the four years 1923-7, 88 communal riots took place in which over four hundred persons were killed and five thousand injured.¹²⁴ From September 1927 to June 1928, there were 19 riots which affected all the provinces except Madras.¹²⁵

The immediate causes of most of the communal riots were music before mosques and cow-slaughter. The Congress leaders found themselves in a virtually helpless position. Gandhi and many Congress leaders, including Muslim ones, believed that the precondition for preventing the recrudescence of communal violence was unity between the leaders of the two communities. They must reach a compromise and it would have a desirable effect on the masses. In a letter to Mohamed Ali, Gandhi wrote that such a compromise would turn distrust into mutual trust. An indissoluble bond between the various communities would be established if we were to unite and win freedom.¹²⁶ If the leaders trusted

one another, the anti-social elements would not be able to provoke and participate in communal clashes. They came on the scene because the leaders wanted them.¹²⁷

In September 1924 there was communal riot in Kohat in which 155 Hindus lost their lives. Gandhi went on a 21-day fast. Hindu and the Muslim leaders met in a unity conference at Delhi and agreed upon measures to improve the communal situation. On 8 October 1924 Gandhi broke his fast. But riots continued to flare up even after that. Communal and revivalist propaganda was always hindering the achievement of communal peace.¹²⁸

It is difficult to establish a correlation between sectarian or communal propaganda and the growing communal rioting. 'Yet', says David Page, 'the fact that those areas which were most inflamed by the campaign were the very ones where the communal riots took place suggests that such a connection did exist.'¹²⁹ It was, therefore, necessary to counter the communal campaign of the Hindu and Muslim leaders. This did not agree with Gandhi's approach. 'Even if the whole Muslim world were to turn against me, I would declare that Malaviyaji is my friend and elder brother. I declare also in the same breath that none of the Musalman leaders is an enemy of Hinduism.'¹³⁰ Not only that, he considered that any communal settlement must have the approval of Malaviya and other communal leaders.¹³¹

The Hindu communal campaign not only included an attack on Islam and Muslim culture but also on communal electorates and other Muslim demands. Lajpat Rai wrote a number of articles in the *Tribune* in 1924 and warned his readers that communal electorates, once accepted, would not be abolished without civil war; that to accept them was to divide the country into Hindu India and Muslim India and that, as the Punjab Muslims were unwilling to grant weightage to minorities, it would be better to partition the Punjab; and if necessary Bengal and to establish a federation of autonomous Hindu and Muslim states.¹³² Strained relations between the communities and growing communalization of politics made secular leaders like Jawaharlal feel as if they were 'caught in a whirlpool of mutual hatred' and were going 'round and round and down and down the abyss'.¹³³

Jawaharlal Nehru considered that the sole cause of communal rioting was religion and superstition. 'The only remedy', he wrote to Syed Mahmud (15 July 1926), 'is to scotch our so called religion and secularise our intelligentsia at least. How long that will take I cannot say but religion in India will kill that country and its peoples if it is not subdued.'¹³⁴ Gandhi, however, thought that the causes of tension were more than merely religious.¹³⁵

The political and economic causes of communal clashes which dominated politics from 1923 to 1935 must be taken into account in addition to the religious factor. The crux of communal politics during this period was a scramble for jobs and positions in the legislative bodies. Dunnett, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, wrote to the Commissioner of Lahore on 18 April 1923, that there was no uncontrollable religious fanaticism or communal ill-will amongst the masses. Ill-will was confined to the upper middle class and to communal leaders, and it was these elements who were responsible for introducing communal tensions among the general population from above.¹³⁶ This became intense after the introduction of the Government of India Act of 1919.

It may be mentioned here that the constitutional reforms in the beginning of the 20th century were the result of national agitation and the demand for self-government. The object of the Morley-Minto reforms was to rally the moderates in support of the government which, in effect, meant no real advance towards self-government, but only the enlistment of the support of the upper-class minority in the interest of imperialism.¹³⁷ In the same way, the Montford reforms did not make any change in the structure of the central government. At the provincial level, it introduced 'dyarchy', according to which certain subjects such as Education, Health and Local Government were 'transferred' to Indian ministers responsible to provincial legislatures. Important subjects such as Police and Land Revenue were 'reserved' in the hands of ministers responsible to the governor. The provincial governors had powers to veto legislation. For the subjects transferred to Indian ministers, there was no money, partly because of economic stagnation. Public expenditure was sharply reduced, with the result that the expectations of the middle classes, both Hindu and Muslim, in matters of jobs and opportunities for patronage were left unfulfilled.¹³⁸

Notwithstanding the limited political utility of these reforms, certain measures like the principle of weightage, separate Hindu and Muslim electoral rolls, lowering the qualifications for franchise in municipal elections and extension of franchise resulted in a larger involvement of the population in political life and changed the composition of the legislature and executive in the states and at the centre. This had a marked effect also on communal relations in all the provinces.

Elections were held in 1920 but they were boycotted by the Congress and the Khilafat Committee. Consequently only the pro-government interests were represented in the newly constituted councils. Those who were elected were mostly moderate zamindars and professional upper-middle-class people like Nawab Ali Choudhry, who had no popular base in Bengal. The same was the case in Punjab and UP.¹³⁹ But the

situation underwent a change in 1923 with the entry of the Swaraj Party into the councils.

The Swaraj Party entered into election fray with the object of wrecking the reformed councils from within and capturing all elected seats in the legislatures and other public bodies like municipalities and district boards. C.R. Das's slogan of 'Swaraj for 98 per cent' attracted towards him a large number of Congress and Khilafat activists. But it was especially the Bengal Pact which made the Muslim voters join hands with Das and his party. It provided representation in the Bengal Legislative Council on the basis of population and with separate electorates; representation to local bodies in the proportion of 60 to 40 in every district; and reservation of 55 per cent of jobs for the Muslims.¹⁴⁰ The election results showed that the Swaraj Party had won 75 per cent of the non-Muslim and over 50 per cent of Muslim seats in the Bengal Council. The Swaraj Party and its allies emerged as a formidable force which could inflict defeat on the government on the issue of immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in January 1924 or on the proposal for grants to pay the salaries of the ministers or the salaries of the Inspectors of Education and Medical Departments in March 1924. The same performance was repeated in August 1924 and March 1925. Undoubtedly, Das was very successful in obstructing the functioning of the council. But some non-Swarajist Muslim leaders were not happy with this policy. In collaboration with the government, they succeeded in alienating the Muslims from the Swaraj Party. The prominent leaders responsible for this development were Sir Abdur Rahim and Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy and A.K. Fazlul Haq. Sir Abdur Rahim persuaded the government in October 1925 to give the Muslims more favourable treatment; to make concessions to the agriculturists; to extend primary school education to the rural areas, and to amend tenancy legislation in favour of the *raiyats*. These measures should be appreciated in the context of the Swarajist opposition to the demands of the peasantry and Fazlul Haq's speech at the Muslim Conference at Faridpur in May 1925. Fazlul Haq declared that the Muslims should repudiate the Lucknow Pact and the Bengal Pact. The Bengali Muslims should set up a Muslim Association, along Hindu Mahasabha lines, with its branches all over the provinces.¹⁴¹ Sir Abdur Rahim, presiding over the All India Muslim League Session at Aligarh in 1925 referred to 'Hindu attacks on the Muslim community' and the necessity to have the Muslim League as the party of the Muslims.¹⁴²

These developments were instrumental in promoting communal tension and disunity. The biggest blow to the Swarajist-Khilafat alliance was the Calcutta riots of 1926. The alliance lay shattered and the communalists gained the upper hand. Had the Hindu Swarajist members

adopted a consistently anti-zamindar, pro-peasantry stand, inside and outside the legislature, they could perhaps have won the lasting support of the vast masses of the Bengal peasantry, the bulk of whom were either Muslims or Hindu untouchables.¹⁴³ But their attitude towards the Tenancy Amendment Bill (1925) or the modification of land proprietorship created by the Permanent Settlement of 1793 betrayed class and communal interests. Had this bill been carried, it would have removed the economic disparities which were largely responsible for communal disharmony and strengthened the forces of unity.

The situation was different in Punjab. The Muslims who were elected in 1920 and who controlled the Punjab Council belonged to the Punjab Muslim Association. Most of the Muslim members of the council came from landlord circles or from upper class families.¹⁴⁴ But the person who was to dominate Punjab politics in the years to come was Fazl-i-Husain who was appointed minister in 1921. He stood for the protection of the peasantry and the extension of beneficent activities to the neglected rural areas. He wanted to aid the backward sections of the community, irrespective of their religion.¹⁴⁵ However, his policies benefited the Muslims most. As Education Minister he favoured special measures to promote Muslim education. In November 1921, he fixed the distribution of places among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs at the Lahore Medical College and Government College, Lahore, in the ratio of 40 : 40 : 20. In matters of recruitment for the medical and educational services, similar orders were issued. A large number of scholarships were awarded to Muslim students. Religious bodies like the Anjuman-i-Himayat-e-Islam were given liberal grants. The extension of communal electorates in many of the municipal committees in the province adversely affected the position of the non-Muslims in the committees.¹⁴⁶

The Hindu members of the Punjab council mounted attack on Fazl-i-Husain who was dubbed 'communal'. This happened in March 1923 when Raja Narendranath moved for a cut in Fazl-i-Husain's salary as a protest against his policies. The Muslims supported him *en bloc*, thus forcing party divisions to run along communal lines.¹⁴⁷ With the support of the Muslim members, inside and outside the council of the zamindars, Fazl-i-Husain could build up a strong party in Punjab.

In 1923, there were three parties which contested the elections, viz., the Rural Party, the Hindu Nationalist Party and the Swaraj Party. The Swaraj Party won only seven of the 79 seats. The elected members represented Hindu and urban constituencies. Their orientation was communal so that they could never agree with the Bengal Pact which favoured the Muslims. They also committed the same mistake as their Bengali counterparts in supporting the Hindu trading and money-

lending class, as in the case of the Punjab Moneylenders Bill which was moved by Mir Maqbool Ahmed in 1926.

At the time of the elections in 1926, Lajpat Rai left the Swaraj Party. He and M.M. Malaviya founded the Nationalist Party in August 1926. The results showed that the Unionist Party of Fazl-i-Husain and Chhotu Ram won a majority of the non-Muslim seats. The Hindu Sabha captured eight, Congress seven and the Khilafat Party only three seats.

In UP, after the elections of 1920, the council was dominated by zamindars. The majority of the Muslim members of the council were the leading landlords of their districts and they acted more as landlords and zamindars than as Muslims. Their common material interests united them though they belonged to different religious communities. The Zamindar Party organized by the Nawab of Chhatari was, therefore, a 'secular' and class-interest-dominated party. Even in the 1923 election, 58 of the 77 rural seats were captured by landholders belonging to the Zamindar Party. The Congress-Swaraj party won 31 out of 100 elected seats. But in the elections to the municipalities in 1923, the Congress-Swaraj Party won a majority at Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Kanpur, Aligarh and Bareilly. This did not ensure any communal peace as the militant Shuddhi and Sanghatan movements were used by the orthodox Hindus for political purposes. In all this, wrote Cassels, the Commissioner, to Lambert, the Hindus had really been the aggressors. The exploitation of communal and religious feelings¹⁴⁸ by the Hindu Sabha leaders was to have its effect on the 1926 elections.

Moonje followed the example of Malaviya. What Malaviya did in the UP was repeated by Moonje in the Central Provinces and Berar. He founded the Hindu Sabha in 1923 in Nagpur with the object of uniting the Hindus, irrespective of caste considerations, and defending Hindu interests. When riots flared up in Nagpur in 1923 on the issue of taking out processions with music before mosques, Moonje found that an opportunity to aggressively assert the 'right' of his community. In the trial of strength, he forced the government to reverse its decision in favour of the Hindus. He said:

A challenge was given to us . . . I took it up manfully and fought it out boldly and clearly. In this struggle persons of every grade and position . . . from the Raja Sahib down to a man in the street . . . have done their bit . . . I decided that the Hindus should not obey the orders . . . I brought about a Sanghatan of the Hindoos, . . . and started a movement to get the government orders reversed in my favour. The movement aroused great enthusiasm. . . . Shastris, Pandits, doctors, pleaders, merchants, all offered themselves for arrest and were actually arrested.¹⁴⁹

The Muslims had to yield, leaving Hindus free to play music before any

mosque. The frequent incidence of communal violence, the resignation of Syed Hifazat Ali from the ministry in 1924 on account of the Swarajist move, the government's decision to permit music before any mosque in Akola in 1926 and the riot of Nagpur in 1927 created a sense of insecurity among the Muslims and alienated them from the Congress and the Swaraj Party and pushed them closer to the government's side. In the 1923 and 1926 elections, the Muslim leaders contested demanding adequate representation in various elective bodies and in public services; adequate provision for Muslim education and religious institutions; guarantees against anti-cow-killing legislation; and prohibition of music in front of mosques. In 1923 four and in 1926 seven Muslims were returned to the council.¹⁵⁰

By November 1926, the Bengal Pact was repudiated by the Swarajists on the plea that it was not ratified either by the Congress or by the majority of the Hindus. The Hindu Swarajists and their supporters were not prepared to side with the Muslim peasantry *vis-a-vis* the landlords. They were opposed to the opening of Islamic colleges and schools and the appointment of Muslims in the Calcutta Corporation.¹⁵¹

Fazlul Haq established the Bengal Council Party with the support of Husain Suhrawardy, Mujibur Rehman, Haji Abdul Rashid Khan and Maulana Akram Khan. Sir Abdur Rahim, another influential Muslim communal leader, established the Bengal Muslim Party in April 1926. He wanted to organize the Muslims on a communal basis so that the 56 per cent of the Bengali Muslims should have a majority in the council. He believed that the Swarajists had no future in Bengal as they had undertaken the impossible task of pleasing the capitalists and zamindars, their patrons, and serving the ryots and labourers at the same time. The Swarajists as a political party had become a mere futility and their much-vaunted Muslim base was a hoax perpetrated on the Muslim electorate of Bengal.¹⁵² In the elections of 1926 the Swarajists fared badly. Very few Muslims were returned on the Swaraj Party ticket. In 1927, Abdur Rahim was requested to form a government, but non-cooperation from the Hindu members forced him to resign.

This account of the role of the political parties inside and outside the legislative councils, clearly indicates the rise of sectarianism, communalism, and division of the people along communal lines. A major role in promoting this kind of communalism was played by political parties like the Swaraj Party which were wedded to secularism in theory but never made any serious effort to remove the sources of communalism in practice. Let us make a brief reference to the working of the Swaraj Party here.

Important leaders of the Swaraj Party could not withstand the pressure of the communal forces. Motilal Nehru's stand on the question of

music before mosques or Ramlila in 1926 shows that there was hardly any difference in practice between a secular and a communal leader. Many Swarajist leaders argued that the Hindu bodies were performing a vital role in social and religious life. They made all-out efforts to convince the people that the Swaraj Party was as good a Hindu body as one could want. They urged the Sabha to join the Congress rather than start a separate political organization of its own.¹⁵³ This was like inviting in the Trojan horse for, in the 1926 elections, the Swaraj Party candidates suffered defeats and lost seats to the Hindu communalist candidates in Punjab as well as UP. In Bengal it lost its Muslim support. It could improve its position in Bihar only because it could retain Muslim support. On 2 December 1926, Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal:

The Malaviya-Lala gang aided by Birla's money are making frantic efforts to capture the Congress. They will probably succeed as no counter effort is possible from our side. . . . We can do no possible good in the Assembly or the Councils with our present members and the kind of men we have.¹⁵⁴

The performance of the Swarajist Party, particularly in the sphere of economic policies, alienated the Muslims from the Congress. No content was provided to the slogan of 'Swaraj for the 98 per cent'. After the death of C.R. Das, the Swaraj Party identified itself with the landlords and took an anti-tenant stand, knowing full well that 'the man behind the plough' in Bengal was Muslim. The party thus became 'the refuge of vested interests', clearing the path for the rise of every variety of reaction. The party espoused zamindari rights in 1928 and refused to consider the growing indebtedness of the peasantry and failed 'to initiate any moves after the onset of the agricultural depression'. In Punjab they wholeheartedly supported the moneylenders and described the anti-moneylenders bill as a Muslim measure to ruin the legitimate economic transactions of the Hindu and Sikh communities.¹⁵⁵ This was not an accident. The Swaraj Party manifesto had assured the landlords that zamindari would not be abolished. It declared that the party

cannot possibly dream of such madness as to undermine the very foundations of society as it has existed for hundreds of years in India by trying to eliminate an important and influential class from it. True it is that the Party stands for justice to the tenant but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord.¹⁵⁶

4. The Gulf Widens

The efforts made at the national level to solve the communal problems should be analysed against this background. The Bengal Pact of C.R. Das was rejected by the Congress in 1923 by 678 votes to 458. Lajpat Rai

and Ansari had prepared a draft of another pact known as the National Pact. This pact envisaged the attainment of full swaraj; a democratic and federal type of government; adequate protection to the interests of the minorities; and separate representation to the various communities in the state and federal legislatures. Ansari wanted that this principle be extended to municipalities and local boards but this was opposed by Lajpat Rai. The latter wanted a fixation of a time limit for such representation.¹⁵⁷ This pact was also rejected by the Congress session of 1924.

After the Kohat riot in 1924, Gandhi went on a 21-day fast. His appeal to the hearts of the Hindus and Muslims to refrain from the violence that tore the very fibre of Indian polity did stir the conscience of the leaders of the various communities. They met in Delhi on 26 September 1924. A unity conference was held. Motilal Nehru was its chairman. It was the most representative conference of the leaders of various communities. The resolutions adopted at the conference provided for freedom of conscience and religion and condemnation of acts like desecration of places of worship, the persecution of converts and use of compulsion for conversion. The leaders took a pledge that they would make all efforts to enforce these principles. But the conference did not produce any permanent effect.

At the instance of Mohamed Ali, an All Parties Conference was convened in Bombay on 21 November 1924. Jinnah was present. He appealed to the Hindus to accept the Muslim demands, i.e. in the Bengal and Punjab Legislature the Muslim representatives should not be in minority and the question of Muslims share in the services should be separately settled. This conference also failed to frame a united scheme in this regard. Gandhi was also helpless. In his Presidential Address at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress (1924) he urged the majority community to 'set the example of self-sacrifice'.¹⁵⁸

On 23 January 1925, another All Parties Conference was held in Delhi. On the advice of Gandhi, a committee was appointed to recommend measures for bringing about unity among the political parties and for providing representation to all the communities in the legislatures. Jinnah repeated the demands which he had elaborated in the first conference at Bombay. Because of the Hindu Mahasabha's opposition to the Muslim demands, no agreement was possible.

During the next two years the communal situation worsened. Bloodshed and violence continued to increase. Gandhi's approach to the communal question was undergoing a change. He no longer thought in terms of religion or of communal leaders, but decided to work from the bottom 'to appeal to the enlightened selfishness of the masses' and spend less time on parliamentary activity.¹⁵⁹ But this approach was not

acceptable to the Congress and the League leaders. In January 1927 he declared, 'I dare not touch the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. It has passed out of human hands, and has been transferred to God's hands alone.'¹⁶⁰

An important development in the direction of formulating the Muslim demands and involving Congress leaders was the conference of Muslim leaders at Delhi on 20 March 1927. It was attended by Jinnah, Shafi Daudi, Syed Murtuza, Mohammed Ismail, Raja of Mahmudabad, Mohammed Shafi, Shah Nawaz Khan, Abdullah Suhrawardy, Mohammed Ali, Ansari, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and others. The proposals were: the separation of Sind from Bombay; reforms for the Frontier and Baluchistan; representation by population in the Punjab and Bengal legislatures; and 33 per cent for the Muslims in the Central Legislature. The leaders also asserted that if these four demands were accepted, the Muslims should agree to give up separate electorates. The Working Committee of the Congress welcomed the proposals on 15 May 1927 and finally accepted them with minor modifications which did not go against the spirit of the proposals. The Hindu Mahasabha did not show any willingness to accept them. Ansari in his presidential address to the Madras Congress in 1927 referred to the importance of the Delhi proposals and described them 'as a great advance on Lucknow Pact of 1916'. The Madras session also endorsed the idea of drawing up a suitable constitution for India with her 320 million people professing different religions and speaking different languages.

In February 1928, the first meeting of the All Parties Conference was held which was attended by the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal Party. There was a controversy over the issue of the separation of Sind. It was opposed by Jairamdas Daulatram, Moonje and Lajpat Rai. Jinnah, Hasrat Mohani and Mohamed Ali wanted separation. One of the Delhi proposals for ensuring a Muslim majority in the Bengal and the Punjab legislatures was also opposed by the Congress, Mahasabha and Sikh delegates. The Muslim delegates took serious note of the attitude of the Congress leaders, like Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, who had now changed their opinions and turned against the decision of their own party. The Muslim delegates decided to boycott the conference.¹⁶¹

The All Parties Conference again met in Bombay in May 1928. But disputes could not be resolved. About the conference, Jawaharlal wrote to Syed Mahmud on 17 March 1928: 'The conference was a very trying affair. It was a battle of few extremists on either side — Jinnah and his group on one side and the Hindu Mahasabha on the other — the others had little say in this matter except they got angry. I was thoroughly fed up with both the groups.'¹⁶²

The conference in June appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru, to frame a constitution for India. The other members of the committee belonged to different communities and different parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberal Party. There were two Muslims on the committee — Ali Imam and Shoib Qureshi.

On 15 August 1928, the report of the Nehru Committee was published. Two of the Delhi proposals (1927) concerning the formation of the North-West Frontier and Sind as separate provinces were accepted. It rejected the principle of weightage for minorities and separate electorates. A unitary form of government was provided at the centre. A Declaration of Rights was incorporated in the constitution, ensuring fullest liberty of conscience and religion. The authors of the Nehru Committee Report believed that adult suffrage would solve the problem of Muslim representation in Bengal and Punjab. In other provinces, where the Muslims were in minority, 'a temporary element of communalism' was introduced in the form of reservation of seats in proportion to their population.¹⁶³ The Nehru Report also envisaged that, if cultural autonomy and religious liberty were guaranteed, the communal problem would be solved.¹⁶⁴

It should be noted that there were inbuilt limitations in framing a constitution because the contending parties were not prepared for a compromise. The Hindu Sabha's opposition to the separation of Sind and to the formation of a North West Frontier Province was 'unreasonable'. But the Muslim demand in regard to reservation of seats for a majority was against 'all constitutional and democratic theory'. Jawaharlal wrote to Syed Mahmud on 30 June 1928 that it was 'wholly unnecessary as the Muslims are bound to have a majority. . . . From my point of view, which is purely economic, it will be very harmful also and prevent the real issues being considered. It seems to me that we must tackle the problem and solve it once for all and not leave anachronisms based on unreal communal differences in the Constitution, specially when it can be demonstrated that the majority Muslim community is really the gainer.'¹⁶⁵ Motilal also thought that, when the Muslim majority provinces were won over, other provinces could be 'easily settled by throwing a few crumbs here and there'.¹⁶⁶

The Muslim reaction to the Nehru Report was swift and sharp. As expected, the Muslims of Bengal and Punjab welcomed it. The Bengal Muslim League, the Provincial Khilafat Committee and leaders like Abdur Rahim, Akram Khan, Hussain Suhrawardy and others endorsed the report. In Punjab, except for the Shafi group, other leaders like Malik Barkat Ali, Sardar Habibullah Khan, Mohammed Alam, Kitchlew and Zafar Ali Khan considered that the report was beneficial to Punjabi Muslims.¹⁶⁷

The Nehru Report was vehemently opposed by Shaukat Ali, Hasrat Mohani, Shafi Daudi, Mohamed Ali and Azad Sobhani. They opposed it on the ground that it accepted the principles of dominion status and a unitary form of government. The former meant the 'bondage of servitude' and the latter implied that 'a Hindu-dominated central government, with residuary powers, would legislate against the Muslim interests'. Besides, the report did not give 33 per cent representation to the Muslims in the central legislature. Mohamed Ali said:

You make compromises in your Constitution every day with false doctrines, immoral conceptions and wrong ideas but you make no compromise with our communalists — with separate electorates and reserved seats. Twenty five per cent is our proportion of the population and you will not give us 33 per cent in the Assembly. You are a jew, bania.¹⁶⁸

The Nehru Report was supported by the Nationalist Muslims who made great efforts to persuade the Muslims as a whole to accept the Report. They included stalwarts like Ansari, Abul Kalam Azad, Syed Mahmud, Ali Imam, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Mohammad Alam, Zafar Ali, Khaliquzzaman, Syed Abdullah Brelvi, Yaqub Hasan, Raja of Mahamudabad. They extended 'unqualified support' to it, issued pamphlets, made public speeches and, in October 1928, came out with a manifesto in favour of the report.

An All Parties Convention met in Calcutta in the last week of December 1928. Jinnah moved three basic amendments to the Nehru Report:

- (i) In the Central Legislature Muslims should have $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent of the seats.
- (ii) That the Residuary Powers should vest in the Provinces and not in the Centre.
- (iii) The Muslims in Punjab and Bengal should be represented on the basis of population for ten years subject to subsequent revision of this principle.

But the Congress and the other Hindu leaders were not willing to accept any amendment to the report.¹⁶⁹ This led to the formation of the All India Muslim Conference. The conference was dominated by the politicians who believed in the utility of seeking co-operation and concessions from the rulers. They launched a campaign of vilification against the Congress and asked the Muslims to disobey its instructions and abstain from participation in its meetings and proceedings.¹⁷⁰ From the platform of this conference Jinnah presented his Fourteen Points which were endorsed by the Jammiat Ulama-i-Hind and which greatly influenced Muslim thinking for the better part of the next decade.¹⁷¹

The Nationalist Muslims were not happy with the attitude of the Muslim leaders towards the Nehru Report in particular and the Congress in general. They were also not happy with those Muslim leaders who were religiously and sentimentally attached to the Khilafat movement and were instrumental in promoting communal tendencies in politics. Much before they attacked the Nehru Report, they were busy criticizing the Congress and its secular approach. The nationalist Muslims, during the Khilafat movement, were keen to keep religion and the ulema within limits. They were acutely aware of the importance of involving the Congress and Gandhi in settling communal differences and arriving at Hindu-Muslim unity. After the abolition of the Khilafat, the nationalist Muslims saw no useful political role for the Khilafat Committee. The Ali brothers did not agree with them. In 1925, Abul Kalam Azad argued that the Khilafat Committee had exhausted its utility and it should hereafter confine itself to the educational problems of the community.¹⁷² But the Khilafat Committee leaders thought differently. In July 1926, Ansari resigned his membership of the Central Khilafat Committee. In his resignation letter he wrote to Shaukat Ali, on 16 July 1926:

But on my return from England in June, I found that communal passions had run amuck and threatened to utterly destroy all that was noble and fine in this unfortunate motherland of ours. I, therefore, felt impelled to do all that lay in me to fight the demon of communalism which was devastating the country and was breaking asunder strong ties formed between the Hindus and Muslims after centuries of intimate associations and common sufferings and sacrifices. As an Indian owing allegiance first to the motherland, I feel I must sever my connection with all communal or sectional political organisations.¹⁷³

The Ali brothers and others hurled all kinds of abuses on the nationalist Muslims. Shaukat Ali's letter to Syed Mahmud on 26 April 1929 may be instanced here. Shaukat Ali wrote:

I consider you all to be weak men and renegades, and, yielding to the open threats of the Hindus, [to] have chosen to live at their mercy. I can understand the course of action taken by Abul Kalam and Zafar Ali, and I also know those hirelings who want to become the members of the council. Their weakness is understandable, but I cannot accept your presence and the presence of Ansari, Tassaduq and Khaliq in that group. . . . The Muslims should stop fighting among themselves. If Malaviya, Setalvad, Chintamani, Lajpat Rai and others could stand united, why should Sir Mohammed Shafi and Sir Iqbal not.¹⁷⁴

The nationalist or Congress Muslims and the Congress were subjected to criticism on the count that they had not gone to the root cause and the genesis of communal violence. Hafiz Hidayat Hosain wrote to Ansari on 12 December 1927:

Mere honeyed phrases and an appeal couched in eloquent and winsome phraseology to the communities to live in amity and grace have never proved to be of any avail. You cry in the wilderness every year. . . . It may do your soul some good, but it does nothing to us. . . . You are then a group of men, well-meaning, well-intentioned, honest and sincere, but all the same afraid to look at things at their face, incapable of tapping the root cause of differences and therefore impotent to devise effective means of cure.¹⁷⁵

On 27 July 1929, the nationalist Muslims established the Nationalist Muslim Party. Its objectives were:

1. To promote among the Muslims of India the spirit of nationalism; to develop a mentality above communalism and to inspire into them a greater confidence in Indian national ideals.
2. To induce the Muslims to take their proper share in national struggle. .
3. To create such relations between majority and minority communities as would lead the former to consider the rights of minorities in a spirit of broad-minded patriotism and the latter in that of true nationalism.¹⁷⁶

It is true that the Nationalist Muslim Party was close to the Indian National Congress. In fact it did not have any independent existence. Its formation, therefore, should be understood in the context of the communal direction of the Muslim politics given to it by the Central Khilafat Committee under the Ali brothers. Shaukat Ali was prominent in maligning the Congress supporters, impugning their bona fides and attacking their character. His complaint was about the Hindu mentality. He wrote to Ansari on 19 May 1929:

They [the Hindus] do not want our friendship; they want our allegiance and God willing they will never get that. For any honourable peace and pact we are always ready but not for the slavery of the Hindus; just as we do not want to remain slaves of the English.

He further wrote:

In your blind adherence to Motilal Nehru and other Hindus, you betrayed Muslims and your friends and co-workers and we both are free now to take lines of action . . . now you yourself see what is being done to kill the

Congress, which has ceased to be national now. It has become an adjunct of the Hindu Mahasabha and will soon be a seeker of favours at the door of the English.¹⁷⁷

Because of this approach both the communities were drifting further and further away from each other. The Ali brothers and their friends finally joined hands with the reactionary wing of the Muslim League headed by the Aga Khan and Mohammed Shafi. Ansari explained to Mazharul Haque that a compromise with them was not possible. They

have developed a point of view from which every thing that is said or done by any Hindu or Nationalist Muslim appears to them to be the direct result of Hindu Mahasabha influence. Their new mentality admits of only two divisions in India, Hindu and Muslim, and not Nationalist and reactionary or non-cooperating and co-operating.¹⁷⁸

When Mohamed Ali and his friends were attacking the Congress and the nationalist Muslims, Gandhi was expressing his helplessness in resolving the communal deadlock. He wrote that 'my faith in unity is as bright as ever; only I see no daylight out of the impenetrable darkness. I cry out to God for light.'¹⁷⁹ In response to Jinnah's Fourteen Points, Gandhi wrote to Motilal, on 12 August 1929, 'My mind is in a whirl in this matter. The atmosphere is too foggy for me to see clearly.'¹⁸⁰

The Lahore session of the Indian National Congress authorized Gandhi to start a Civil Disobedience Movement. Ansari and other nationalist Muslims considered that the time was not ripe for this. In his long letter to Gandhi on 13 February 1930, he argued that the object of Hindu-Muslim unity could not be achieved because the Congress leaders did not stick to the pact approved at the Madras Congress (1927). Thereafter, in the All Parties National Convention held in December 1928 at Calcutta, the Hindu Mahasabha leaders destroyed all chances of understanding. Moreover, the situation was quite the reverse of what it was in 1920. The dissatisfaction against the government in 1930 was not as great as in 1920. Hindu-Muslim unity, Sikh support to the Congress, unity inside the Congress and a non-violent atmosphere were all comparatively less in evidence now and, therefore, the country was least ready for starting a campaign of civil disobedience in any shape or form, and it would do 'incalculable damage should you decide to embark on such a campaign now or in the near future'.¹⁸¹

Gandhi's reply was: 'I agree that the Hindu-Muslim problem is the problem of problems. But I feel that it has to be approached in a different manner from the one we have hitherto adopted — not as at present by adjustment of the political power but by one or the other acting on the square under all circumstances.'¹⁸²

Motilal Nehru's reaction to Ansari's letter was forthright:

It is now my firm conviction that Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be achieved by preaching it. We have to bring it about [by means] which will accomplish it without either Hindus and Muslims realising that they are working for unity. This can only be done on an economic basis and in the course of the fight for freedom from the usurper. . . . I have definitely come to hold the opinion that no amount of formula based upon mutual concessions which those making them have no right to make will bring us nearer Hindu-Muslim unity than we are at present.¹⁸³

Gandhi and Motilal did not agree with Ansari's analysis of the political situation and with his approach to Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi no longer wanted unity through conferences, pacts or middlemen, i.e. leaders, but through fighting for common causes. 'I want you', Gandhi wrote to Ansari on 3 March 1930, 'to realise the new orientation I have given to the struggle. I seek independence through a redress of the age-long grievances which touch the masses more than us.'¹⁸⁴

This posture was not acceptable and its intrinsic value was not realized by the Muslim leaders of different shades. The nationalist Muslims believed in some formula on which all should agree. While the All India Muslim Conference aimed at drawing up a constitution in which appropriate safeguards are provided to protect the Muslim interests and rights, Mohamed Ali, on behalf of the Central Khilafat Committee wanted an adequate and effective share for the Muslims in the governance of India as defined in the Fourteen Points of Jinnah.¹⁸⁵ In the First Round Table Conference also the Muslim delegates, Jinnah, Shafi, Aga Khan, Mohamed Ali and Zafarullah Khan, stressed separate electorates. But they were not inflexible about this demand. They were prepared to accept joint electorates provided their other demands were accepted. The memorandum circulated to the delegates by Mohamed Ali expressed

the Mussalmans desire — and this is the crux of their 14 points and not separate electorates — that there should be federal government so that the Central Unitary Government with a permanent Hindu majority should not override them everywhere; . . . that in the Provinces of the Punjab and Bengal where they have small majorities in population which were unorganized and greatly controlled by the Banias and the Sikhs and the Hindu landlords as in Bengal, these majorities should not be reversed . . . the Mussalmans should be allowed to have their majority in all these four provinces as the Hindus have everywhere else.¹⁸⁶

But the Hindu Mahasabha delegates, who believed they were the authentic representatives of the Hindu community, did not agree to any amicable communal settlement.

Gandhi, after the failure to solve the communal problem at the Round Table Conference, declared that he wished to give the Muslims what they wanted. He would not act as a bania and would leave everything to the honour of the Muslims.¹⁸⁷

Since Gandhi seemed prepared to concede the demand of separate electorates, the nationalist Muslims brought pressure on him to refrain from doing so. The nationalist Muslims, Ansari and Sherwani, told Gandhi that separate electorates were bad not only for the country as a whole, but also for the different communities. They strongly argued that if the reactionary demand of separate electorate for each community was accepted they would oppose the reactionary Muslims and also Gandhi.¹⁸⁸ A.M. Khwaja wrote to Gandhi on 21 March 1931 that he should not 'betray' the Muslims by acceding the demand for separate electorates.¹⁸⁹ The nationalist Muslims also attempted to influence the Muslim League and Muslim Conference to accept joint electorates. A conference was held at Simla in April 1931 but it did not register any success. Various attempts were made but all failed. Even in the Second Round Table Conference no agreed plan could be evolved because the contending parties were too intransigent about their own schemes to appreciate the worth of other schemes.¹⁹⁰ The result of the Indian leaders' failure to submit an agreed plan on the communal question was Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award. But before we take up the implications of the Award, we may refer to the Civil Disobedience Movement and to Muslim participation therein.

On 12 March 1930, Gandhi began his march to Dandi and reached Dandi on 5 April 1930. According to Tarachand, the breaking of the salt law caught the imagination of the people. The movement swept across the country. Salt making, salt peddling, courting arrest, suffering brutal police attacks, going to gaol, forcible breaking of meetings, shootings, confiscation of property, were the order of the day. In all the big cities large public meetings were held. About 100,000 persons were arrested, foreign goods worth thirty crore rupees were sealed in the city and port of Bombay and general imports were reduced to one-third or one-fourth and cigarettes to one-sixth of the normal. A decline had started on Sterling securities in India. Sixteen British-owned cloth mills of Bombay were closed. Khadi production and sale went up. The Spinners' Association employed about 140,000 spinners, 11,500 weavers and 1,000 carders. Government revenue and forest income fell.¹⁹¹

It is estimated that during 1920-22, 30,000 arrests were made, while in 1930-31 they increased to 60,000. Between January 1932 and March 1933, 120,000 satyagrahis were arrested.¹⁹² During the course of the Salt Satyagraha, 12,000 Muslims were arrested. The Congress claimed that the majority of Muslims were sympathetic to the movement. Eminent

leaders like Abbas Tyabji, Abul Kalam Azad, Ansari, Syed Mahmud, T.A.K. Sherwani, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Khali-quzzaman and many others individually participated in the satyagraha. The Jammiatul Ulma-i-Hind, Ahrarul Islam, Khudai Khidmatgars and the Nationalist Muslims Party, as organizations, took part in the movement.¹⁹³

But the Muslim participation in the Salt Satyagraha was not as vigorous as it was in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-21. The Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah, refused to join it. Mohamed Ali, from the platform of the All India Muslim Conference, denounced the campaign: 'We refuse to join Mr Gandhi, because his movement is not a movement for the complete independence of India but for making the seventy millions of Indian Mussalmans dependents of the Hindu Mahasabha.'¹⁹⁴ The anti-satyagraha movement, worsening communal situation, and an absence of boldness on the part of the Congress leaders had certainly made the Muslims lukewarm towards the Civil Disobedience Movement. In Tamilnad, they stood aside from the movement as they were disillusioned with the Swarajists as well as the Gandhians. The rise of new Hindu militancy was also received with alarm. Even those Muslim legislators who sympathized with the Congress Movement 'had to stay in the legislature to press Muslim demands'. The Muslim foreign-cloth dealers 'resented Congress picketing directed against them and sought police protection'.¹⁹⁵ The incidence of communal violence also made the Muslims hostile to the Congress.

In the United Provinces the Muslims were conspicuous by their absence in the Salt Satyagraha. The absence was part of their alienation from Congress and its policies. The Muslims were not happy with the Congress as they could now see no distinction between the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha: 'the Hindu Sabhaites and the Congressmen' says Pandey, 'formed, for all practical purposes, a team working for a common cause. They might indeed have been the same people — and in the 1920's they often were.'¹⁹⁶ In fact the Muslims held counter demonstrations at Kanpur, Lucknow and other places. The position in UP

replicated a countrywide pattern. The 1932 sample survey, conducted simultaneously in several provinces, revealed the overwhelming Hindu composition of the Satyagrahis. The variations were unimportant, from 89 per cent Hindus (and Sikhs) in Punjab and 91 per cent in Delhi, to over 99 per cent in the Central Provinces and Bihar and Orissa. Only the North West Frontier Province defied the pattern; here the 1500 persons jailed for Civil Disobedience between December 1931 and December 1932 were all Muslims except for 5 Hindus and 2 Sikhs.¹⁹⁷

Here a number of instances could be cited to show that the British

administrators, through the landlords and some ulema, made a lot of effort to wean Muslims away from the Civil Disobedience Movement.¹⁹⁸ They were successful to a great extent. But even in the UP, it may be noted that men like Hasrat Mohani and Maulivi Riyasat Husain did their utmost for the success of the Civil Disobedience Movement.¹⁹⁹

On 16 August 1932, the Communal Award was announced. The Muslim demand for the provision of a majority in Punjab and Bengal was conceded. Separate electorates were also retained. The Muslim leaders described the award as a 'distinct advance'. The communal Hindus condemned the award and called for a total opposition to it. The Congress maintained a neutral position by refusing to accept or reject it.

M.M. Malaviya took the initiative to undo the wrong done to the Hindus by the award. He wanted to secure 'a permanent honourable agreement between the two communities'.²⁰⁰ He met Shaukat Ali with a view to convening a unity conference in November 1932. The Muslim League and the Nationalist Muslim Party agreed to co-operate with Shaukat Ali in negotiating an honourable settlement between the two communities. The Unity Conference held at Allahabad on 3 November 1932 did not oppose the concessions made to the Muslims by the award. It upheld the validity of separating Sind with certain conditions. The Muslims agreed to give up separate electorates and modify the claim of percentage of seats in the Central Legislature. The conference also agreed on the method of election which underlined that the elected candidate must poll 30 per cent of the votes of his community and the highest number of votes on the joint electoral roll.

Malaviyaji and other Hindu leaders were satisfied with the proposals of the conference. The All Parties Muslim Conference met in Allahabad on 11 December 1932 to review the suggestions of the Unity Conference. It was attended by representatives of the Muslim League, the Khilafat Conference, the Nationalist Muslim Party, the Ahrar Party, Jamiatul Ulema of Kanpur and Delhi and the Shia Conference. The speeches at the conference were in general opposed to separate electorates and emphasized the necessity of a communal settlement by the Indians themselves. But it was not the unanimous opinion of the Muslim community. Prominent leaders from Punjab and Bengal did not approve the idea of holding a unity conference and rejecting the award which had turned the scales in favour of the Muslims of those provinces. In the meanwhile, the British Government had accepted the share of Muslim representation in the federal chambers and the demand of separation of Sind. This practically killed the proposals of the Unity Conference because, in effect, all the 14 points were accepted by the government.

In the Third Round Table Conference of November 1932, the Hindu and Muslim delegates found themselves divided as the former made a

frontal attack on the award and the latter demanded a greater share in each house of the Central Legislature. Once again, all efforts to bridge the gulf between the two communities ended in failure. The Muslim League, in April 1934, finally reiterated its acceptance of the award 'as far as it goes until a substitute is agreed upon by the various communities'. On 21 May 1934, Ansari issued a statement explaining the Congress policy:

The Congress knows that while a large number of Hindus and Sikhs have taken strong exception to the Communal Award, a considerable section of Mussalmans, Harijans and Christians have accepted it for so long as an agreed substitute is found. The Congress will always strive to help to find a national solution of the question, but in my opinion such a solution of the question cannot be found except by a Constituent Assembly convened to frame a national Constitution. Until then, the question of acceptance or rejection of the mode or proportion of representation as contained in the Award does not arise.²⁰¹

The Congress policy on the award resulted in a split in its ranks. Malaviya and Moonje established a separate party — the Nationalist Party.

The period under review is characterized by efforts to solve the communal question which became very prominent after 1923. Gandhi's splendid success during the Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement was followed by an ever-widening rift between the two communities. There was no dearth of earnest efforts but they were all destined to fail. Not that the Indian leaders were incapable of grappling with the reality of communalism, but that the British authority could frustrate such efforts and keep the communities divided. No other leader understood this better than Gandhi. He did attempt to evolve a strategy for solving the communal problem, viz., involving the masses in participation in the political process through adult suffrage, launching a political struggle along non-communal lines and waging a fight for the redressal of the common grievances of all. Gandhi thought that the Civil Disobedience Movement would serve as a sovereign remedy. But the correctness of his approach was no guarantee of success either for Gandhi or the Congress because the Machiavellian British power could not be 'sterilized'. The British power were not silent spectators of the communal situation in the country. They made a determined bid to counter all attempts directed against their authority and for forging the unity of the people. They never lost the initiative and more often than not the progressive leaders were at the receiving end. They successfully exploited the communal, class and religious divisions to their own benefit. They used the zamindars and *jee huzoors* to bring about a split in the

Khilafat movement. Similarly, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, strenuous efforts were made, through the religious leaders and other sections of society, to dissuade the people from participating in the movement. The edge of any anti-imperialism could be blunted by letting loose a reign of terror accompanied by concessions and safeguards for the privileged strata of the Indian people. They knew whom to encourage and whom to suppress in order to achieve their objective.

Who were selected as delegates to the Round Table Conference on 6 September 1931? Ansari wrote to Shaukatullah Ansari:

I am positive that the government has deliberately left the Nationalist Muslim Party unrepresented at the Round Table Conference, because they do not want the Hindu-Muslim question to be settled without their intervention. . . . It is, therefore, against their interest to have the representatives of that party . . . for they . . . would deprive the Government from playing their trump card against the representatives of India. . . .²⁰²

Hailey's correspondence with Fazl-i-Husain clearly shows how and why Shafat Ahmad Khan and the Nawab of Chhatari were selected as delegates.²⁰³ The Hoare-Willingdon correspondence throws sufficient light on the background of the Communal Award, designed to win over the Muslim leaders and weaken the nationalist struggle. On 10 July 1932, Willingdon wrote to Hoare:

We are dealing with people — emotional, suspicious, apprehensive of their future and apt to be hasty in opinion and violent in action. If the Muslims are now carried away into opposition, we shall be faced with a situation in this country which almost certainly will demand measures more drastic than we have yet taken. We should have the whole forces of the country against us, Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu liberals feel themselves affronted by the decision not to continue the Round Table Conference. We cannot afford to be wholly without friends.²⁰⁴

The politico-economic system established by the British did positively hinder communal unity. Historically speaking, argued Smith, the industrial and commercial centres, have been in places remote from Muslim centres; Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Bengali Muslims could not derive any benefit because they belonged to the lower strata. Thus, throughout the country, the balance numerically was not in favour of Muslims. The advent of machine goods and the emergence of Muslim petit-bourgeoisie created among the Muslims the consciousness of being exploited by non-Muslims oppressing them.²⁰⁵

In the tertiary sector of the economy which was growing rapidly, the Muslim share was on the decline. The Muslims failure to adjust to the

changed circumstances became the main reason for their growing poverty. The Report of the United Provinces Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-1930, described some features of the Muslims' economy. A witness stated:

His [Muslim's] standard of living is infinitely more expensive than that of the Hindu . . . Hospitality, moreover, is to him almost a religious duty. . . . The charge of thriftlessness can be more justifiably laid at the door of the Muslim than of the Hindu peasant. His economic position is also seriously affected by the Muslim law of inheritance. . . . The Muslim again is more litigious than the Hindu . . . his family pride prevents him from taking up commercial occupations unless he happens to have been born into some trade. . . . The natural result is that the Muslim falls quickly and easily into debt to an even greater extent than the Hindus.²⁰⁶

A similar tendency on the part of Punjab Muslim peasants made Malcolm Darling comment that, 'No community can hope to thrive with so great a handicap, and if the Muslim community wishes to keep abreast of its rivals it would be wise to consider seriously how debt can be reduced. . . .'²⁰⁷

The market economy adversely affected the Muslim artisans in the weaving industry and handicrafts.²⁰⁸ In the labour market, the employment opportunities were not many. The struggle for jobs sometimes strengthened 'communal distinctions; with workers of one community trying to retain jobs for men of their own community. Certain prejudices between castes and communities continued to exist in the day-to-day relationships between workers within one factory.'^{208a} In relation to capital, class unity did develop but it co-existed with community distinctions. The economic unrest and conflict was reflected, more often than not, in communal tension. The peasant and the artisan population which constituted the bulk of the Muslim community was easily open to communal appeal. In communal consolidation and separation it could see a ray of hope.

In the 1920s, after the introduction of the Montford reforms, communalism grew rapidly. What was also striking was that there seemed to be no alternative to communalism. Fazl-i-Husain's educational and recruitment policies which could be justified on grounds of 'communal' justice proved counter-productive. The rural-urban divisions ultimately turned out to be a thoroughly communal measure from the political point of view. Those who were opposing Fazl-i-Husain were not above communalism. There was no reason why an economic measure like the anti-moneylending bill should have been debated on communal lines. The communally organized parties added, if not in theory, certainly in practice, further difficulties. The Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill of

1928 clearly divided the pro-landlord Swarajists and pro-peasantry National Muslim Congressmen like Asimuddin Ahmed, Abdul Mansur Ahmed, Syed Nausher Ali, Shamsuddin Ahmed and Tamizuddin Khan. They considered the Swarajist attitude 'trachery' — more fatal than even what had been brought about by the Permanent Settlement. They were disillusioned with the Swarajist-Congress organization.²⁰⁹ They established a new party, the All Bengal Praja Party.

The structure and the composition of the councils made the communal divisions sharp. 'Hindu' interests and 'Muslim' interests became the current basis of politics. Separate electorates reinforced them. Gandhi correctly pointed out in his letter to Srinivasa Iyengar on 27 April 1927, that 'the more I study the Council's work, the effect of entry into the councils upon public life, its repercussions upon the Hindu-Muslim question, the more convinced I became not only of the futility but of the inadvisability of Council entry.'²¹⁰ The nomination of the candidates, electoral campaigning and the performance in the councils were tainted with communalism. The Nationalist Muslim Party which worked on Congress lines gave its members liberty of speech and vote as regards communal matters.²¹¹ With the functioning of major political parties with a communal slant and the ever-increasing electorate with excessive exposure to communal campaigning, they could not be expected to behave in a secular way. They were literally caught in a communal net from which they were never extricated.

In 1937-38, when the Congress launched the Muslim mass contact movement, it did not deliver the goods but proved harmful. Communalism had become too strong to be countered by secular preaching. Shankar Lal, Secretary Delhi Congress Committee, had written to Sarojini Naidu, on 22 August 1926:

It is a matter of very great regret, if not of positive shame, that Hindus of Delhi do not realise the importance and significance of Delhi elections, and swayed by communal currents, are determined upon putting up Hindu candidates on communal tickets. . . . The result is a foregone conclusion. The Muslim candidate fails because he is a Muslim. And quite naturally this incident would furnish a very strong illustration, to be quoted in and out of season by all those who swear by separate electorates all round.²¹²

The exploitation of the element of religion was becoming a standard practice in mobilizing the people in electoral and political struggles. *The Bulletin of Bombay Satyagraha Committee*, 11 June 1930, asked: 'Can Muslim hearts ring true and yet allow this government to make cowards and weaklings of us all? Can the hand that ravages Palestine, tyrannises Egypt, harasses Turkey, be the protecting one for the Indian Muslims? Will our Muslim comrades be taken in by the Simon bluff?'²¹³ What

Gandhi said in 1921 — 'I can wield no influence over the Mussalmans except through a Mussalman. . .'²¹⁴ — was becoming a fact of public life. Ansari confessed before the 1934 election that 'I am afraid we shall not be able to get a single Sikh returned and very few Muslims.'²¹⁵ Notwithstanding the broad secularism of the top Congress leaders, communalism was making a deep impact on the minds of the people owing to an interplay of economic and political forces accompanied by communal propaganda in 'word' and in 'deed'.

The approach of the Congress leaders could not check the growth of communalism and communalisation of public life. After all Muslim society had never been a monolith. The divisions in it along material economic and political lines were deep and wide. Had the approach to communal question developed by Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in the early 1930s been followed immediately after the First World War, the situation perhaps would have been different. The Congress as a party could never firmly decide to involve either the ulema, or communalist, liberal or nationalist Muslims in solving the communal question. When the party sought to approach the masses directly, the leaders tried to ignore it. There was not 'a single reference to the Hindu-Muslim relations in the resolutions passed by the numerous meetings of UP Congressmen between 14 June 1931 and the end of December 1934.'²¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru struck a different note by frontally attacking the phenomenon of communalism and communal parties but this could not be done without attacking religion.

The Congress leaders were generally unprepared to accept the ulema as true representatives of the Muslims. They were right. But they also did not fully trust the liberal leaders. When the conflict between the communalist Muslim leaders and the nationalist Muslims became sharper the Congress leaders were in a dilemma. This was mainly because no distinction was possible between the Congress and the Mahasabha leaders. The latter brought pressure on the liberal and progressive Congressmen not to negotiate or yield to the Muslim demands under the threat that they would otherwise oppose Gandhi and Motilal. Lajpat Rai advised Motilal 'not to place much faith in Jinnah's party. Jinnah has no following.'²¹⁷ Other Muslim leaders like Yaqub Hasan and Fazl-i-Husain were described as 'slippery' and uncontrollable. The communalist leaders also impressed on Motilal that he [Motilal] had more Muslim followers than Jinnah had. Motilal wrote to Gandhi, on 14 August 1929, 'He [Jinnah] is simply trying to reinstate himself with his followers by making preposterous demands . . . I am quite clear in my mind that the only way to reach a compromise with the truly nationalist Muslims is to ignore Mr Jinnah and the Ali brothers altogether'.²¹⁸ Motilal also believed that Jinnah and Mohamed Ali had been discredited in the eyes of their

own party members and had lost their confidence.²¹⁹ Even if this were true, at no time, particularly after 1923, could they be ignored.

The Congress leaders were really very near to the nationalist Muslims and the Nationalist Muslim Party which functioned as a part of Congress. The nationalist Muslims were the consistent supporters and loyal defenders of the Congress policies and programme. They made a remarkable contribution in evolving what is known as composite nationalism. The concept had its religious basis but it facilitated Muslim participation in the freedom struggle and provided support to counter the pernicious two-nation theory.^{219a} This does not, however, mean that they were indifferent to the Muslim demands. There existed a number of similarities between the liberal Muslims like Jinnah and the nationalist Muslims. The nationalist Muslims believed that the anxiety of Muslims to secure certain safeguards and guarantees for their community in the future Constitution of India was genuine and they would do their best to realize all these demands.²²⁰ They did not make any distinction between a communal Hindu and a communal Muslim. They desired unity, organization and political sense in the Muslim community as was found among the Hindus.²²¹ Besides, the nationalist Muslims believed that a communal settlement could be achieved if the leaders of both the communities agreed to resolve their differences. Right from 1924 onwards they were busy in bringing the contending parties together. They were extremely satisfied with the Congress and League approving the Delhi proposals of 1927. They could, therefore, not appreciate the new approach to communal unity 'from the bottom'. They had hoped in 1932 that they would welcome any agreement which would involve 'reactionary' Muslims like Shaukat Ali and 'reactionary' Hindus like Malaviya. When Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah, on behalf of the Congress and Muslim League, were negotiating on the communal question, Abul Kalam Azad wrote to Prasad that he should take full advantage of the situation as he had found Jinnah in a conciliatory mood and considered him a person who could deliver the goods on behalf of the Muslims.²²² Their constant complaint was that, had the Congress accepted the Delhi proposals in 1928, the whole misunderstanding between Congress and Muslims would have disappeared.²²³

Like the liberal and communal Muslims, the nationalist Muslims were unhappy with the Hindu Mahasabha leaders' influence on the Congress organization. In a conflict between Motilal and Malaviya, the nationalist Muslims always sided with the former. They disapproved of the Shuddhi and Sanghatan campaigns. With the exception of Kitchlew, no nationalist Muslim supported the Tabligh and Tanzeem work which was undertaken by the ulema. The nationalist Muslims considered the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha harmful to communal unity and the larger

interests of the country.²²⁴ They complained to Gandhi and Motilal Nehru that the Hindu Mahasabha leaders like Malaviya, Moonje and Jayakar destroyed all chances of understanding, particularly after 1927. Even then, wrote Azad to R. Prasad, a Hindu Mahasabhaite was tolerated as a Congressman and not a Muslim Leaguer.²²⁵ In spite of their grievances against certain Congress policies, they never thought of leaving the Congress Party. Ansari wrote to Tassadduq Ahmed Khan Sherwani on 6 January 1930: '... but, we must not leave the Congress nor must we do anything to weaken the Congress. After all, the will of the majority must prevail, that is the only guide for any democratic institutions. ... To leave the Congress would be to commit political suicide, to oppose the Congress would be a crime.'²²⁶ The nationalist Muslims never wavered or vacillated on the question of the character of British rule which had been against the interests of the Muslims as well as country as a whole.

The nationalist Muslims were disdained both by the communal Muslims and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders. The former condemned them for 'betraying' the Muslim cause. Moonje looked upon the Nationalist Muslim Party as an attempt 'to enter the Muslims in the Congress in large numbers so that they may ... exercise pressure from inside'.²²⁷ Both these charges were unfounded. The nationalist Muslims were truly 'men of exceptional ability' and 'transparent sincerity'. They were 'an elite of intellect rather than a band of mass leaders'.²²⁸ They could 'have no roots in Muslim society'.²²⁹ Their organization was weak and sporadic; it did not have any independent existence.²³⁰ This was one of the reasons for their alienation from the mass of Muslims. About Syed Mahmud's election to the AICC, Rajendra Prasad wrote to Motilal on 11 April 1926:

... for about two years he has not been in the good books of our Muhammadan friends who have been trying by all means to run him down. His influence among his co-religionists has been considerably reduced on account of this campaign against him and had it not [been] for the votes of Hindus, he would have not been [elected] to the AICC. He was not elected to the All India Khilafat Conference, as there were no Hindus there to support him.²³¹

The nationalist Muslims were admirers of Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru.²³² They also held Gandhi in very high esteem. But the Nehrus knew their limitations. About Ansari's misgivings on certain points in the Nehru Report, Motilal wrote to Purushottamdas Thakurdas on 17 June 1928: 'It is going to be a unanimous report. I like your way of putting it that it is disconcerting to find that I have differed from men like Ansari and Shauib Qureshi instead of saying that it was unfortunate

that Ansari and Shauib Qureshi should differ from a man like me. How could they dare?’²³³ According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the nationalist Muslims

were all upper middle-class folk, and there were no dynamic personalities among them. They took to their profession and business, and lost touch with the masses. Indeed, they never went to the masses. Their method was one of drawing-room meetings and mutual arrangements and Pacts, and at this game their rivals, the communal leaders, were greater adepts . . . they stand divested of every shred of principle or practice on the basis of which they founded their group, and which they had proudly nailed to their masthead — of everything, all, except their name!

The collapse and elimination of the Nationalist Muslims as a group . . . forms a pitiful story.²³⁴

In the context of the weakness of the Muslim leadership in general, the only alternative was the perfect mobilization of the masses, Hindu and Muslim, irrespective of religious considerations, the necessity of which was realized by Gandhi and Nehru. But it was not possible in the presence of the British authority and ideological and organizational limitations of the Congress.²³⁵ The dominant section of Congress leadership consisted of the exploiting classes, therefore a commitment to progressive economic ideology was absent. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was for the abolition of the zamindari system was constrained to write: ‘Those views have no application to present day politics and in any event the Congress is not committed to these views.’²³⁶ The dominant section of Congress leadership was also not interested in promoting secular thinking and secular mobilization of the people.²³⁷

Notes and References

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2. B.M. Bhatia, ‘Agriculture and Co-operation’ in *The Economic History of India (1857-1956)*, edited by V.B. Singh, Bombay, 1965, p. 135.
3. Cf. V.B. Singh, ‘Trade Union Movement’ in V.B. Singh (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 570; B. Shiva Rao, *The Industrial Worker in India*, London, 1939, pp. 18-9.
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Prices in India 1913-23

1913	143	1919	276
1914	147	1920	281
1915	152	1921	236
1916	184	1922	232

Prices in India 1913-23 (Contd.)

1917	196	1923	215
1918	225		
	(1873 = 100)		

Source: *Statistical Abstract for British India 1917-18 to 1926-27*, p. 628, Table 297.

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 22; Donald W. Ferrel, 'The Rowlatt Satyagraha in Delhi' in *Essays on Gandhian Politics — The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, edited by R. Kumar, London, 1971, p. 198.
7. A.M. Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 7, Delhi, 1979, pp. 360-1.
8. Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Muslims and the Congress*, Delhi, 1979, p. 266.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
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12. *Ibid.*, p. 473.
13. Ravinder Kumar, 'Introduction' to work cited in n. 6 above, p. 12.
14. Ubaidullah Sindhi, *Shah Waliullah aur Unki Siyasi Tahrik*, Lahore, 1952, pp. 110-11. See also Blunt, *India Under Ripon*, London, 1909, pp. 294-5.
15. Aziz Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford, 1964, p. 63; Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 6.
16. Lytton to Salisbury, 21 May 1877, Lytton Papers, quoted in P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 119.
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18. Syed Ahmed Khan, *Aakhri Mazameen*, Lahore, 1898, pp. 32-3. Also Gail Minault, n. 15 above, p. 6; W.C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, Lahore, 1943, p. 224.
19. For details see Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 134-5.
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23. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
24. V. Chirol to Hardinge, 24 January 1912, quoted in Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power — Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 138.
25. P.C. Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 110-1.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

27. Minute by Meston on the Cawnpore Mosque Affair, Home Poll, A, October 1913, 100-18, National Archives of India, quoted in Francis Robinson, n. 19 above, p. 215.
28. See Moin Shakir, *Khilafat to Partition — A Study of Major Political Trends among Indian Muslims during 1919-1941*, 2nd edition, Delhi, 1983, Chs. II and IV; Mushirul Hasan, *Mohammed Ali — Ideology and Politics*, New Delhi, 1981, Ch. II; Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964*, Oxford 1967, Ch. IX; Waheeduz Zaman, *Towards Pakistan*, Lahore, 1964, pp. 19-20; F. Rahman, 'Muslim Modernism in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental And African Studies*, XXXI (i), 1958, p. 89.
29. *Sedition Committee Report*, Calcutta 1918, para 165; Shantimoy Ray, *Freedom Movement and Indian Muslims*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 33-34; Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916-1928*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 101-2.
30. P.C. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 133; Gail Minault, n. 15 above, p. 61.
31. A large number of the ulema signed the *fatwa* but it would be wrong to assume that there were no dissidents. Quite a few influential ulema belonging to the Deoband and Bareilvi Schools did not sign it. Some of these ulema were not happy with the anti-British and pro-Hindu postures of the leaders of the Khilafat agitation. See Syed Jamaluddin, 'The Bareilvis and the Khilafat Movement' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan Islamic Trends in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1981, pp. 344-50.
32. *Bombay Chronicle*, 2 March 1919.
33. Ravinder Kumar, 'Introduction', n. 6 above, p. 7.
34. H.F. Owen, 'Organizing for the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919' in Ravinder Kumar (ed.), n. 6 above, p. 76; James Masselos, 'Some Aspect of Bombay City Politics in 1919', *ibid.*, pp. 180-1.
35. See M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, 1958 (reprint), p. 325; CWMG, Vol. 14, pp. 141-2; CWMG, Vol. 15, p. 296; CWMG, Vol. 23, pp. 200-9; CWMG, Vol. 24, pp. 136-54.
36. Judith M. Brown, n. 24 above, p. 9.
37. CWMG, Vol. 17, p. 391.
38. P.C. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 143; J.M. Brown, n. 24 above, p. 136.
39. CWMG, Vol. 15, pp. 296-7.
40. Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 150. Qazi Adeel Abbasi says that it is not clear when and where the first Khilafat committee was set up. He feels that the movement of the Anjuman-e-Khuddam-i-Kaaba was converted into the Khilafat Committee by Abdul Bari. It was shifted to Bombay as the leaders there were ready to take the responsibility to run it. Qazi Adeel Abbasi, *Tahreek-e-Khilafat*, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 38-9.
41. P.C. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 144.
42. Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, pp. 158-9.
43. P.C. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 144.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
45. CWMG, Vol. 16, p. 307.

46. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), *Source Material for History of the Freedom Movement, Khilafat Movement 1920-21, Vol. X* (collected from the Maharashtra State Records), Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1982, p. 23.
47. *Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind*, Mukhtasar Tarikh, Meerut, 1963, p. 4; Gail Minault, n. 15 above, p. 81.
48. Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 146-7.
49. Ibid., p. 147.
50. Ibid., p. 148.
51. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 103.
52. Bamford, n. 22 above, Appendix E, pp. 240-1.
53. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 154.
- 53a. Abul Kalam Azad, *Masla-e-Khilafat Wa Jaziratul Arab*, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 19-25.
54. Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 164; K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, pp. 180-6; 197-201; 244-5.
55. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 229.
56. Ibid., p. 230.
57. Ibid., p. 231.
58. Ibid., pp. 258-9.
59. *Bombay Chronicle*, 29 April 1920.
60. *Huriyat*, 23 April 1920. Generally the idea of *hijrat* is attributed to Abdul Bari. In fact Mohamed Ali pleaded for *hijrat* much earlier. In his letter to Chelmsford on 24 April 1919, he wrote:

In view of our present weak condition, migration is the only alternative for us; and if we are forced either to forswear on leave our motherland, we could only migrate from this great country to which Islam brought its blessings more than twelve hundred years ago. A Mussalman is required by his faith, which is catholic and universal, to maintain an extraordinary detachment from country and race. . . . But greater call would make us leave this dear land of ours — never dearer than now that we would be taking our leave of it — for it would be an imperative call of religious duty.

Mohammed Ali Papers, Jamia Millia, Delhi; Mizhar Ansari, *Tahrik-i-Muslim League*, Delhi, n.d.

61. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, pp. 340-5.
62. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 153.
63. See for details of the Congress Sessions at Calcutta and Nagpur, Francis Robinson, n. 19 above, pp. 325-7. The *Muttafiqa Fatwa* declared:
 - (i) It is unlawful to be members of the government councils.
 - (ii) It is unlawful to serve as lawyers in government courts.
 - (iii) It is unlawful to receive education in government schools or colleges aided by government.
 - (iv) It is unlawful to accept honorary magistracy and titles given by government.
 - (v) All the government services from which government receives help are forbidden (*haram*) specially serving in the army and police is a serious sin as they are in duty bound to shoot their brothers.

64. Robinson, n. 19 above, p. 326.
65. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 164. In the same conference Mohamed Ali said: 'I declare today that the Indian Army is the army of Mahatma Gandhi; the Indian Police is the police of Mahatma Gandhi; every man is on the side of Gandhi; nay, on the side of religion and country. The aspect of affairs is now quite changed. I see that God has already issued his commandments.'
66. Ibid., pp. 165, 168-9.
67. Ibid., p. 166.
68. Ibid., p. 168.
69. Ibid., p. 171.
70. See for details Roland E. Miller, *Mapilla Muslims of Kerala — A Study in Islamic Trends*, Madras, 1976, pp. 125-6; David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad — Nationalist Politics in South India 1919-1937*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 71-2; E.M.S. Namboodripad, *The National Question in Kerala*, Bombay, 1952, pp. 121-34; *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Government of Madras*, Madras, 1922, p. 3273; Charles W. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, London, 1936, pp. 83-117; Robert Hardgrave, *The Mappila Rebellion 1921*; 'Peasant Revolution in Malabar', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1977; Sukhbir Choudhry, *Moplah Uprising (1921-23)*, Delhi, 1977; K.N. Panikker, 'Peasant Revolts in Malabar in the 19th and 20th Centuries' in A.R. Desai (ed.), *Peasant Struggle in India*, Delhi, 1977.
71. Ronald E. Miller, n. 70 above, pp. 133-4.
72. Ibid., pp. 138-9; Gail Minault, n. 15 above, p. 147; Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 174-5.
73. David Arnold, n. 70 above, p. 72.
74. B.S. Moonje's Report to Shankaracharya of Puri on Malabar Riots, Moonje papers (35), National Library, Calcutta. Quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 191.
75. Abul Kalam Azad, *Khutbat-e-Azad*, edited by Malik Ram, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 44-57; Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided*, Bombay, 1947, p. 123.
76. Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 179-80.
77. Syed Shaifuddin Pirzada (ed.), n. 11 above, pp. 558-61.
78. For details see Robinson, n. 19 above, pp. 332-3; and Pandey, n. 5 above, Ch. 6.
79. Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 185-7.
80. Pandey, n. 5 above, p. 215.
81. Bamford, n. 22 above, p. 191.
82. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 49.
83. Ibid., p. 103. On 5 March 1920, Abdul Bari sent a telegram to Chotani: 'Calcutta Conference Resolutions are very urgent in view of British Ecclesiastic hostile attitude. If you cannot take responsibility keep aloof. Do not put hindrance.' Ibid., p. 114.
84. In the All India Khilafat Conference, November 1919, Abdul Bari said: 'Even if all the powers of Europe combined to destroy Turkey, they themselves would be destroyed. He [I] did not take satyagraha vow because that movement was only concerned with dying if the need arose; where, however, one might have to kill, every step would have to

be taken. A choice had now to be made between becoming a Kafir . . . and being true Muslim.' Ibid., p. 50.

85. Qazi Abdul Ghaffar, *Hayat-e-Ajmal*, Aligarh, 1950, p. 228.
86. Quoted in Robinson, n. 19 above, p. 334.
87. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, pp. 761, 171-2.
88. Ibid., p. 257.
89. Ibid., pp. 80, 364; Brown, n. 24 above, pp. 153-5.
90. Ibid., pp. 51, 135, 384.
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92. See Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, pp. 167-8.
93. Satya M. Rai, *Legislative Politics and the Freedom Struggle in the Punjab, 1897-1947*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 95. See also K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 238.
94. Note for the viceroy by Sir James Meston, 7 February 1917, Meston Papers (i), quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 91.
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96. Ibid., pp. 78-93.
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99. Ibid., p. 54.
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101. Ibid., p. 93.
102. Ibid., p. 86.
103. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, pp. 273-4.
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107. Ibid., p. 60.
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110. Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 10.
111. K.K. Choudhri (ed.), n. 46 above, p. 52.
112. Quoted in Robinson, n. 19 above, p. 339.
113. Cf. Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 194.
114. G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, 1923-1925*, Vol. 2, Delhi, 1974, p. 211; B.M. Taunk, *Non-cooperation Movement in Indian Politics*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 150-3.
115. CWMG, Vol. 24, p. 137.
116. Bamford, n. 22 above, pp. 204-5.
117. Abdul Bari's Press Statement, 20 August 1923.
118. See Robinson, n. 19 above, p. 288.
119. K.K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan — A Study in Nationalism*, Islamabad, 1977, p. 185.
120. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, New York, 1964, pp. 61-2.

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122. See for details Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, pp. 236-7; Pandey, n. 5 above, p. 116; A.K. Azad's Presidential Address to the Special Session of Indian National Congress, 15 September 1923, Delhi, in *Kutbat-e-Azad*, n. 75 above, pp. 205-9.
123. AICC Papers (3), quoted in Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 238.
124. See W.R. Smith, *Nationalism and Reform in India*, London, 1938, p. 353.
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126. CWMG, Vol. 23, pp. 200-01.
127. Ibid., Vol. 24, pp. 136-54.
128. See Khaliquzzaman, n. 97 above, pp. 70-3; Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, pp. 248-50.
129. David Page, *Prelude to Partition — The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932*, Delhi, 1982, p. 75.
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 153. For details see Pandey, n. 5 above, pp. 119-24; David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 129-39; Manoranjan Jha, *The Role of Central Legislature in the Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 95-97.
 154. Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, 1958, p. 52.
 155. See Hiren Mukherjee, *Recalling India's Struggle for Freedom*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 95-244; Tanika Sarkar 'Communal Riots in Bengal' in Mushirul Hasan, n. 31 above, pp. 291-2; Satya M. Rai, n. 93 above, p. 131; Pandey, n. 5 above, pp. 195-7.
 156. K.M. Pannikar and A. Pershad (eds.), *The Voice of Freedom — Selected Speeches of Pandit Motilal Nehru*, Bombay, 1961, p. 512.
 157. *Indian Quarterly Register* 1923, pp. 127-8.
 158. Sankar Ghose (ed.), *Congress Presidential Speeches*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 174; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 356-8.
 159. See CWMG, Vol. 25, p. 418, Vol. 26, p. 54, Vol. 31, p. 251.
 160. CWMG, Vol. 32, p. 511.
 161. Mushirul Hasan 'The Delhi Proposals: A Study in Communal Politics', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, pp. 389-96.
 162. Jawaharlal Nehru to Syed Mahmud, 17 March 1928, in Datta and Cleghorn (eds.), n. 133 above, p. 88.
 163. All Parties Conference 1928: Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the Principles of the Constitution for India, Allahabad, 1928, pp. 43-4.
 164. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 165. Jawaharlal Nehru to Syed Mahmud, 30 June 1928, in V.N. Datta and B.E. Cleghorn (eds.), n. 133 above, p. 89. See also All Parties Conference 1928, n. 163 above, pp. 159-68.
 166. Motilal to Annie Besant, 30 September 1928, in Jawaharlal Nehru, n. 154 above, p. 65.
 167. See Mushirul Hasan, n. 29, above, pp. 281-5; David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 184-5; All Parties Conference, n. 163, above, Appendix.
 168. Speech at the All India Khilafat Conference, Calcutta, 25 December 1928, quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, pp. 286-7; Shafat Ahmad Khan, *What are the Rights of the Muslim Minority in India?* Allahabad, 1928.

169. The Hindu Mahasabha leaders were great supporters of the Report, as Jayakar wrote to N.C. Kelkar on 28 April 1928, it was 'more beneficial to the Hindus than any scheme so far suggested on the Congress side'. On 31 October 1928, Jayakar wrote to Polak: 'It is for the first time that Congress leaders like Motilal and Dr Ansari and others have descended on the *terra firma* and come within the region of practical politics from the aerial clouds which they were chasing for so many years.' See Jayakar papers, File No. 442, National Archives, New Delhi.
170. Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism: The Emergence of the Demand for India's Partition*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 49; David Page n. 129 above, pp. 195-6.
171. Mohammed Nouman, *Muslim India*, Allahabad, 1942, pp. 283-7.
172. Abul Kalam Azad, Presidential Address to the All India Khilafat Conference in *Khutbat-e-Azad*, n. 75 above, pp. 225-31.
173. Ansari to Shaukat Ali, 16 July 1926, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8, above p. 19.
174. Shaukat Ali to Syed Mahmud, 26 April 1929, in Datta and Cleghorn, n. 133 above, p. 94.
175. Hafiz Hidayat Hosain to Ansari, 12 December 1927, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, pp. 41-2.
176. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
177. Shaukat Ali to Ansari, 19 May 1929, *ibid.*, p. 70; Osman Sobani to Ansari, 4 July 1929, *ibid.*, p. 72.
178. Ansari to Mazharul Haque, 7 September 1929, *ibid.*, pp. 86-7.
179. Quoted in S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 139.
180. Gandhi to Motilal, 12 August 1929, quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 28 above, p. 88.
181. Ansari to Gandhi, 13 February 1930, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, pp. 94-100.
182. Gandhi to Ansari, 16 February 1930, *ibid.*, p. 100; Jawaharlal Nehru to Mohammad Alam, 29 October 1933, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 6, 1974, pp. 156, 80-5.
183. Motilal Nehru to Ansari, 17 February 1930, *ibid.*, pp. 103-4.
184. Gandhi to Ansari, 3 March 1930, *ibid.*, p. 118.
185. K.K. Aziz (ed.), *The All India Muslim Conference, A Documentary Record 1928-35*, Karachi, 1972, p. 59.
186. Mohamed Ali's Last Letter to the Prime Minister of England, 1 January 1930, AICC Files, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML), quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 63.
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188. See S.C. Bose, n. 120 above, p. 215.
189. A.M. Khwaja to Gandhi, 21 March 1931, A.M. Khwaja Papers, NMML.
190. For details see Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, pp. 68-78; S.C. Bose, n. 120 above, Ch. 12; David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 237-45.
191. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 4, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 126-8; Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1946, pp. 381-94; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 204-7.

192. R.C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India*, London, 1950, pp. 984-8.
193. Tara Chand, n. 19, above, p. 128.
194. *The Times of India*, 24 April 1930.
195. David Arnold, n. 70 above, pp. 129-30; Christopher John Baker, *The Politics of South India, 1920-1937*, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 193-4; John Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline' in Johnson, Gallagher and Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation*, Cambridge, 1973; Rajat K. Ray, 'Historical Roots of the Crisis of Calcutta, 1876-1939', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21 July 1979, pp. 1209-11.
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197. Ibid., p. 113; Gautam Chattopadhyaya, n. 139 above, pp. 115-6; Tanika Sarkar, 'The First Phase of Civil Disobedience in Bengal, 1930-1', *Indian Historical Review*, July 1977.
198. Pandey, n. 5 above, pp. 127-9.
199. Ibid., pp. 146-7.
200. Quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 87.
201. Ibid., p. 96.
202. Ansari to Shaukatullah Ansari, 28 September 1931, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, p. 129; David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 209-14.
203. Fazl-i-Husain Papers, Hailey to Fazli, 24 May 1930; Fazli to Hailey, 29 May 1930; quoted in David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 220-21.
204. Willingdon to Hoare, 10 July 1932, quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 85; Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism', *Indian Historical Review*, July 1976, pp. 114-46; Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 144-70; Pandey, n. 5 above, pp. 115-6, 127-8; CWMG, Vol. 74, p. 1.
205. W.C. Smith, n. 18 above, pp. 192, 210, 217; R.P. Dutt, n. 137 above, pp. 462-3; A.R. Desai: *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1959, p. 152; A.K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India*, Cambridge, 1973.
206. *Report of the United Provinces Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30*, Vol. I, Allahabad, 1930, p. 41; *Report of the Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1930, p. 30.
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208. D.R. Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times, 1860-1939*, London, 1971, pp. 330-4; Pandey, n. 5 above, pp. 132-4.
- 208a. Chitra Joshi, 'Kanpur Textile Labour: Some Structural Features of Formative Years', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, November 1981, p. 1828; Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Bigoted Julaha', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 'Review of Political Economy', January 1983, pp. AE 20-21.
209. Gautam Chattopadhyaya, n. 139 above, pp. 111-12.
210. Gandhi to Srinivasa Iyengar, 27 April 1926, CWMG, Vol. 30, p. 371.
211. Satya M. Rai, n. 93 above, p. 155.
212. Shankar Lal to Sarojini Naidu, 22 August 1926, AICC Papers, G 52(i)/1926.
213. *Bulletin of Bombay Satyagrah Committee*, 11 June 1930, quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 28 above, p. 106.

214. CWMG, Vol. 21, p. 479.
215. Ansari to Shaukatullah Ansari, 21 May 1934, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, p. 154.
216. Pandey, n. 5 above, p. 150.
217. Quoted in Mushirul Hasan, n. 29 above, p. 305.
218. Motilal Nehru to Gandhi, 14 August 1929, quoted in David Page, n. 129 above, p. 200. In a similar way, Jawaharlal Nehru underestimated Jinnah's position in the Muslim community:

May I suggest to Mr Jinnah that I came into greater touch with the Muslim masses than most of the members of the Muslim League? I know more about their hunger and poverty than those who talk in terms of percentages and seats in the Councils and places in the state services. I have had vast Muslim audiences in Punjab or elsewhere. They did not ask me about the communal problems or percentages of separate electorates. They were intensely interested in the burden of land revenue or rent, of debt, of water rates, of unemployment and of many other burdens they carry.

Jawaharlal's Press Statement, 10 January 1937.

219. Motilal to Gandhi, 18 August 1929, quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 49.
- 219a. Husain Ahmed Madni, *Muttahada Qaumiat aur Islam*, Delhi, 1938; Abul Kalam Azad, n. 75 above.
220. Ansari in *The Leader*, 15 April 1931.
221. Mazharul Haque to Ansari, 3 September 1929, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, p. 85.
222. Azad to Rajendra Prasad, 18 February 1935, Rajendra Prasad Papers, quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, pp. 105-6; David Page, n. 129 above, pp. 237-41.
223. Azad to R. Prasad, 15 August 1938, *ibid.*, p. 122; Ansari to Gandhi, 13 February 1930 cited above.
224. See Page, n. 129 above, p. 103.
225. Azad to Prasad, 8 December 1937, quoted in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 123; Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Hindu and Muslim Communalism', *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, 1974, pp. 161-71.
226. Ansari to T.A.K. Sherwani, 6 January 1930, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, p. 90; Ansari to Maharaja of Mahmudabad, 11 April 1930, *ibid.*, p. 121; Ansari to Khaliquzzaman, 1 March 1930, *ibid.*, pp. 111-12; T.A. Khan Sherwani to Ansari, 2 December 1934, *ibid.*, p. 202; Moin Shakir and S.H. Magrabi, 'Ideology of Nationalist Muslims', *Secular Democracy*, August 1972, pp. 63-73.
227. 22 August 1929, Moonje Diaries, Moonje to Jayakar, 31 July 1929.
228. K.K. Aziz, n. 119 above, pp. 174-5.
229. Khaliquzzaman, n. 97 above, p. 102.
230. *Ibid.*; Aziz, n. 119 above, pp. 175, 181, 183.
231. Rajendra Prasad to Motilal Nehru, 11 April 1926, in Datta and Cleghorn, n. 133 above, p. xvi; Aziz, n. 119 above, pp. 191-2.
232. Once Vallabhbhai Patel said of J. Nehru that he was 'the only genuine nationalist Muslim in India'. Hiren Mukherji, n. 155 above, p. 131.

233. Motilal Nehru to Purushottamdas Thakurdas, 17 June 1928, in Uma Kaura, n. 170 above, p. 48.
234. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography, with musings on Recent Events in India*, New Delhi, 1962, p. 139.
235. For details see the essays of Ravinder Kumar and G. Pandey in D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj; Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, London, 1977.
236. Jawaharlal Nehru to Altafur Rahman, 30 July 1931, quoted in Pandey, n. 5 above, p. 197; F.K. Nariman to Ansari, 11 December 1933, in Mushirul Hasan, n. 8 above, p. 143; Hiren Mukherji, n. 155 above, p. 127; G.K. Lieten, 'The Civil Disobedience Movement and the National Bourgeoisie', *Social Scientist*, May 1983, pp. 33-48; Bipan Chandra, n. 204 above, p. 152.
237. Jawaharlal Nehru to Syed Mahmud, 9 December 1939, in Datta and Cleghorn, n. 133 above, p. 185; Tej Bahadur Sapru to Syed Mahmud, 4 June 1942, *ibid.*, p. 228; Kapil Kumar, 'Peasants' Perception of Gandhi and His Programme, Oudh, 1920-1922', *Social Scientist*, February 1983, pp. 26-30; Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World*, London, 1936, p. 89.



Lala Lajpat Rai, who presided over the special Congress Session of 1920



C. Vijiiraghavacharya, who presided over the Congress Session of 1920

Hakim Ajmal Khan, who presided over the Congress Session of 1921

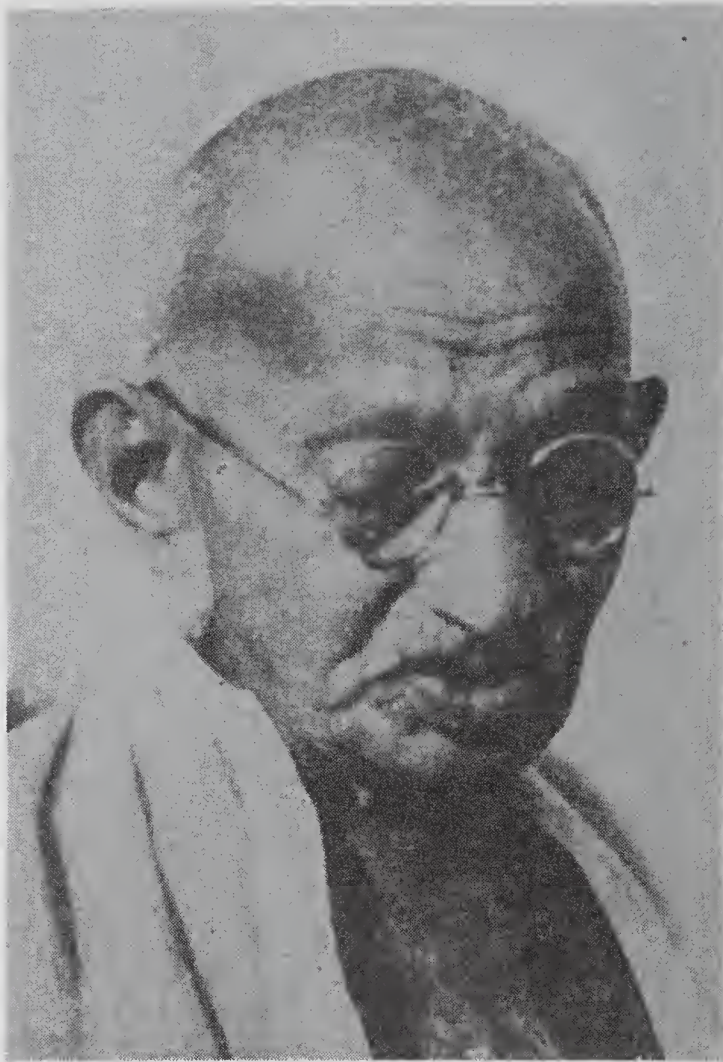


C.R. Das, who presided over the Congress Session of 1922





Maulana Mohamed Ali, who presided over the Congress Session of 1923



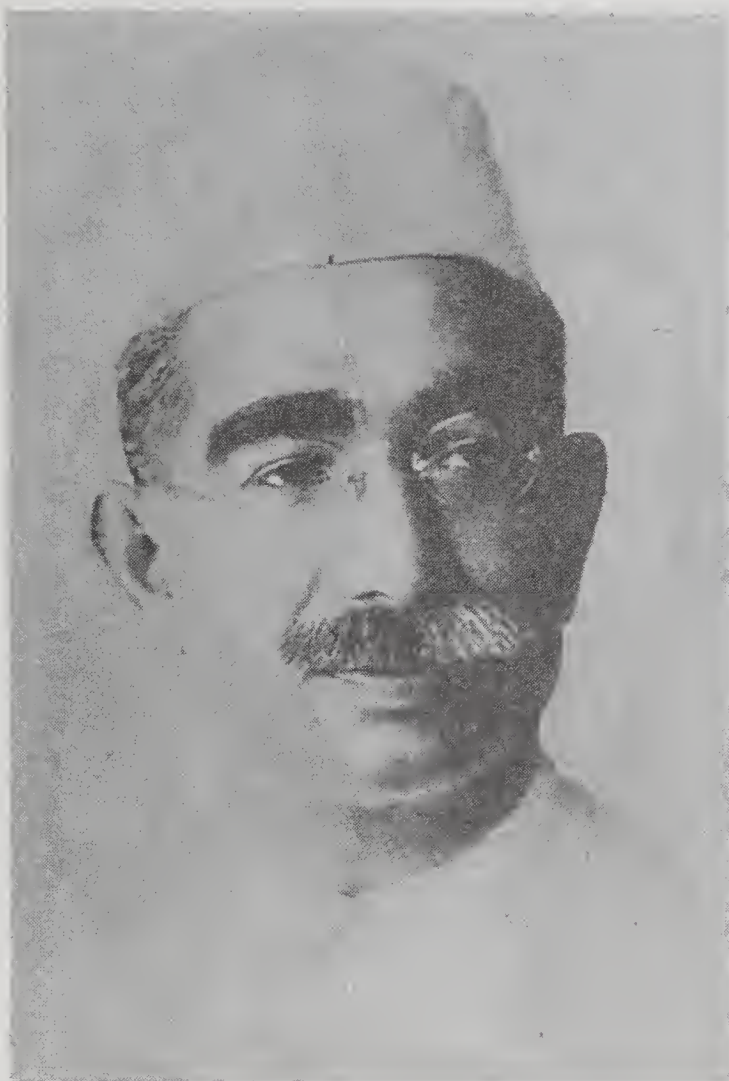
M.K. Gandhi, who presided over the Congress Session of 1924

Sarojini Naidu, who presided over the Congress Session of 1925

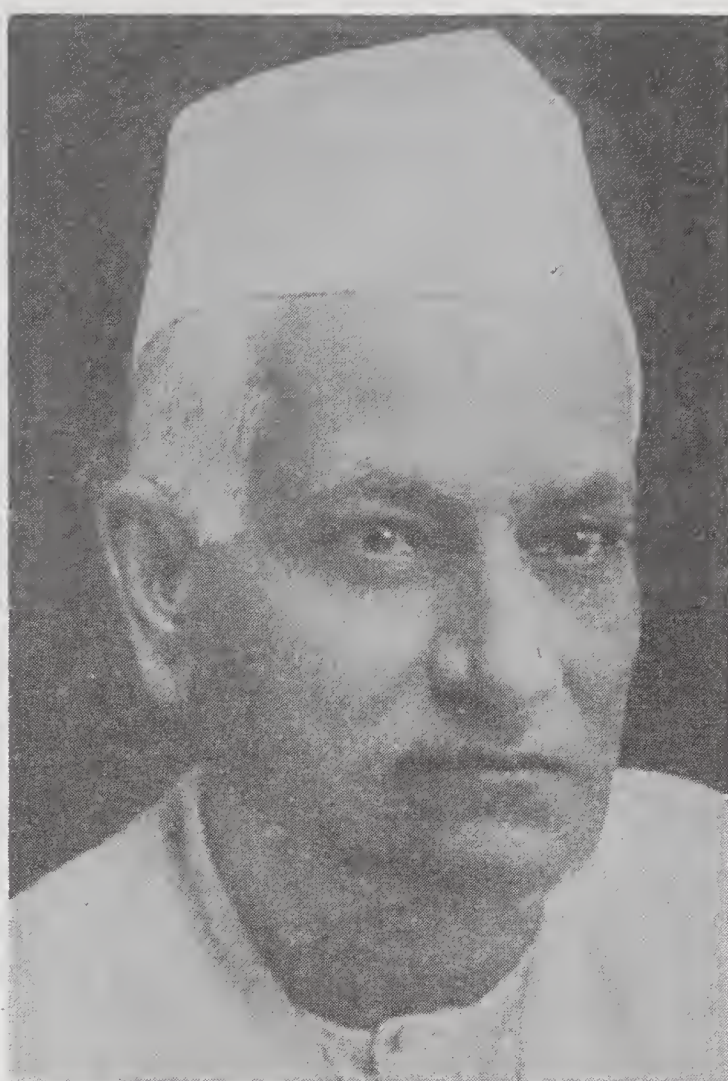


S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who presided over the Congress Session of 1926





M.A. Ansari, who presided over the Congress Session of 1927

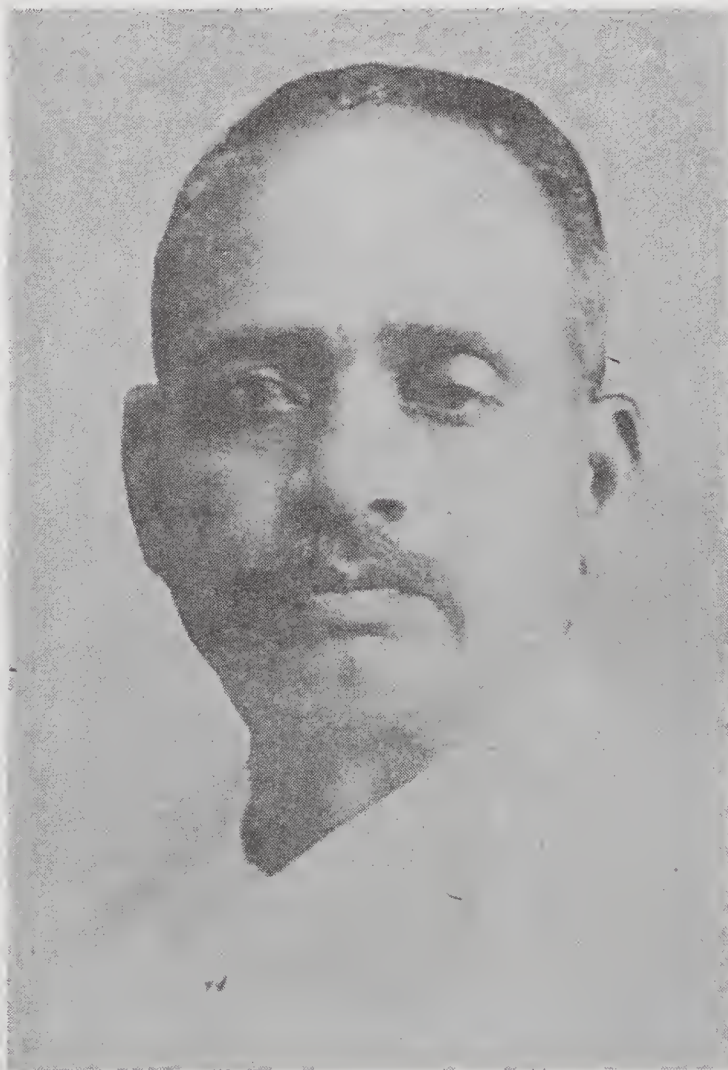


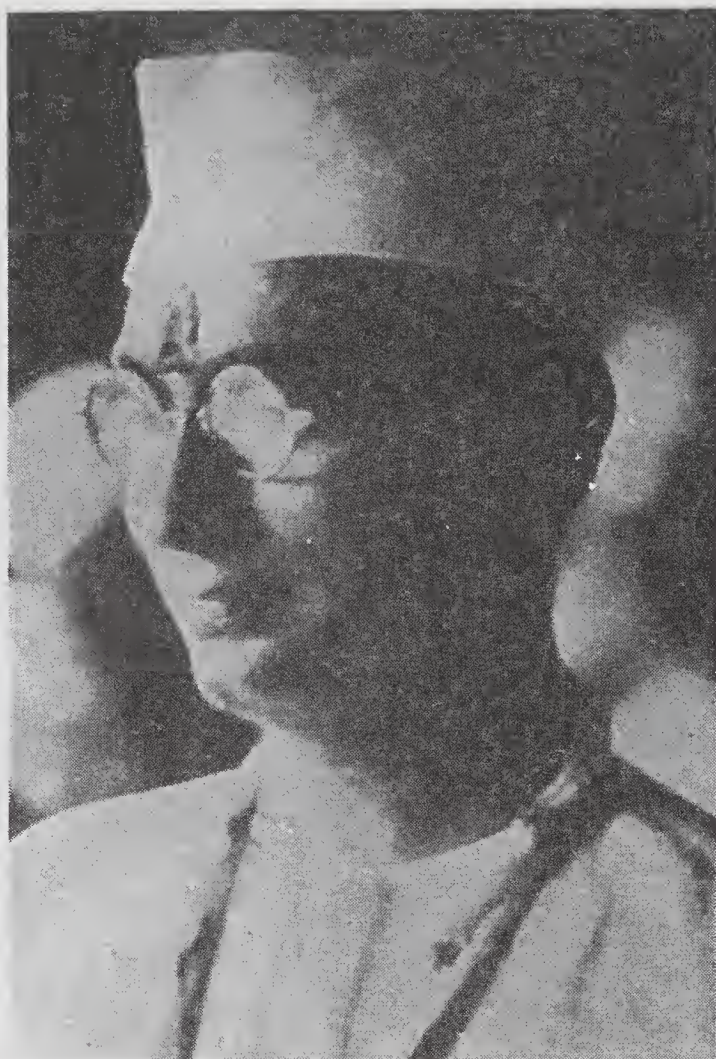
Motilal Nehru, who presided over the Congress Session of 1928

Jawaharlal Nehru, who presided over the Congress Session of 1929



Vallabhbhai Patel, who presided over the Congress Session of 1931

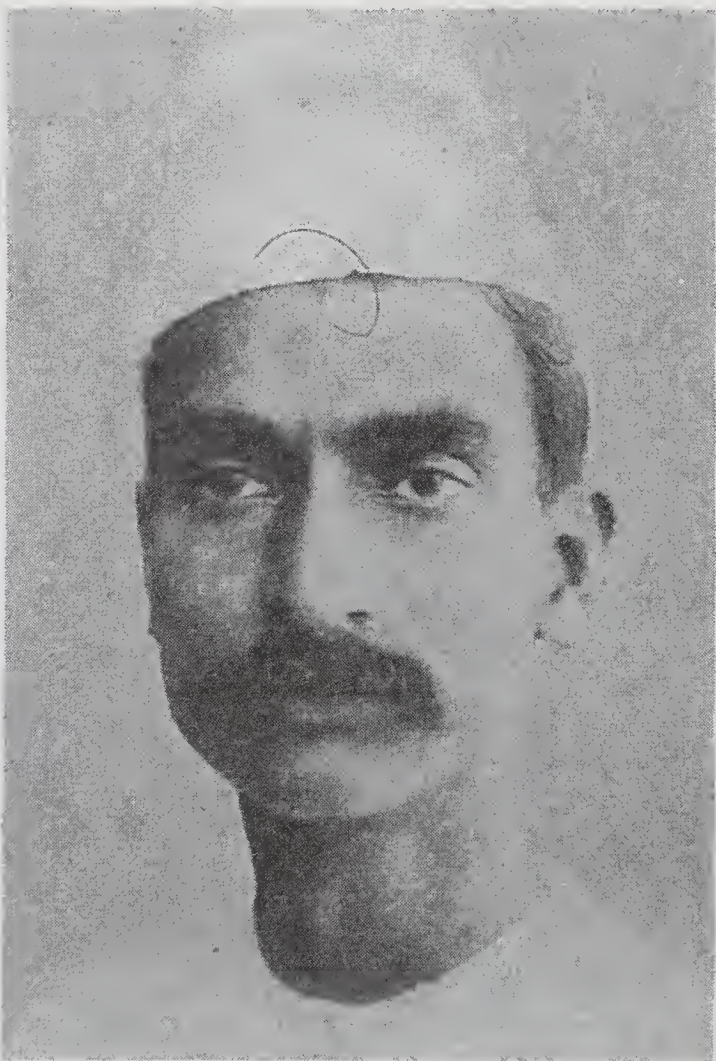




Seth Ranchhoddas, who presided over the Congress Session of 1932



Mrs N. Sengupta, who presided over the Congress Session of 1933



Rajendra Prasad, who presided over the Congress Session of 1934-35

BLACK BILL DEMONSTRATORS FIRED ON

TRAGEDY AT DELHI.

SEVERAL KILLED AND INJURED.

AMAZING CONDUCT OF POLICE AND MILITARY.

MACHINE-GUN IN ACTION.

(From our Correspondent)

DELHI, March 30

March 30th was a day of great tragedy for India. A meeting of Hindus and Muslims, who had gathered in the city to protest against the Black Bill, was fired on by the police and military.

The police and military were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency. The police were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency. The police were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency.

The police were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency. The police were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency. The police were firing on the demonstrators from the British Residency.

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Newspaper report from the Bombay Chronicle of 1 April 1919

A publicity poster from the Bombay Chronicle of 5 April 1919

Gandhiji and Umar Sobani coming out of a mosque in Bombay after addressing a meeting in April 1919

"BLACK SUNDAY"

GREAT POPULAR DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE BLACK ACT.

The following is the Programme of the demonstrations which have been arranged for SUNDAY NEXT:

SUNDAY, 6th APRIL, 1919:

SEA BATH 6 a.m. -- 8 a.m. CHOWPATTY

Meeting on Chowpatty Sands 8 a.m.

Mahatma Gandhi and others will speak and a resolution will be put to the Meeting regarding the Tragedy of Delhi.

PROCESSION 8-30-10 a.m.:

Chowpatty Sea Face	Girgaum Back Road
Sandhurst Bridge	C. P. Tank Road
Sandhurst Road	Madhav Baug.

3-30-LADIES' MEETING, CHINA BAUG.

Mrs. Jayakar presiding.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu; Mahatma, Gandhi:— Speakers.

6-30-MASS MEETING--FRENCH BRIDGE.

If you value your freedom you will join.





Dr Satyapal, a prominent leader of Amritsar



Saif-ud-din Kitchlew, a prominent leader of Amritsar

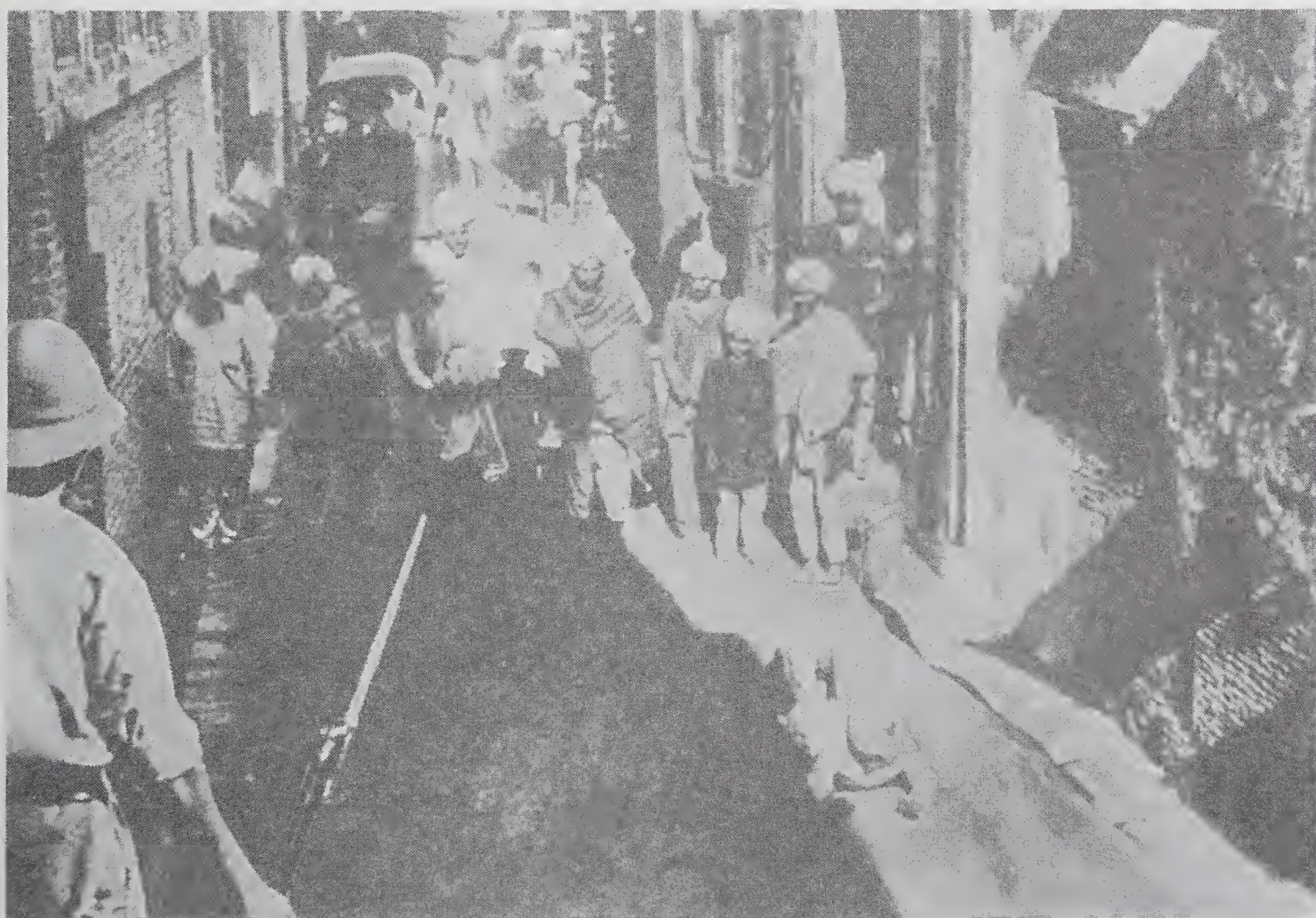
Jallianwala Bagh, where a massacre was enacted on 13 April 1919





An artist's recreation of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre on 13 April 1919

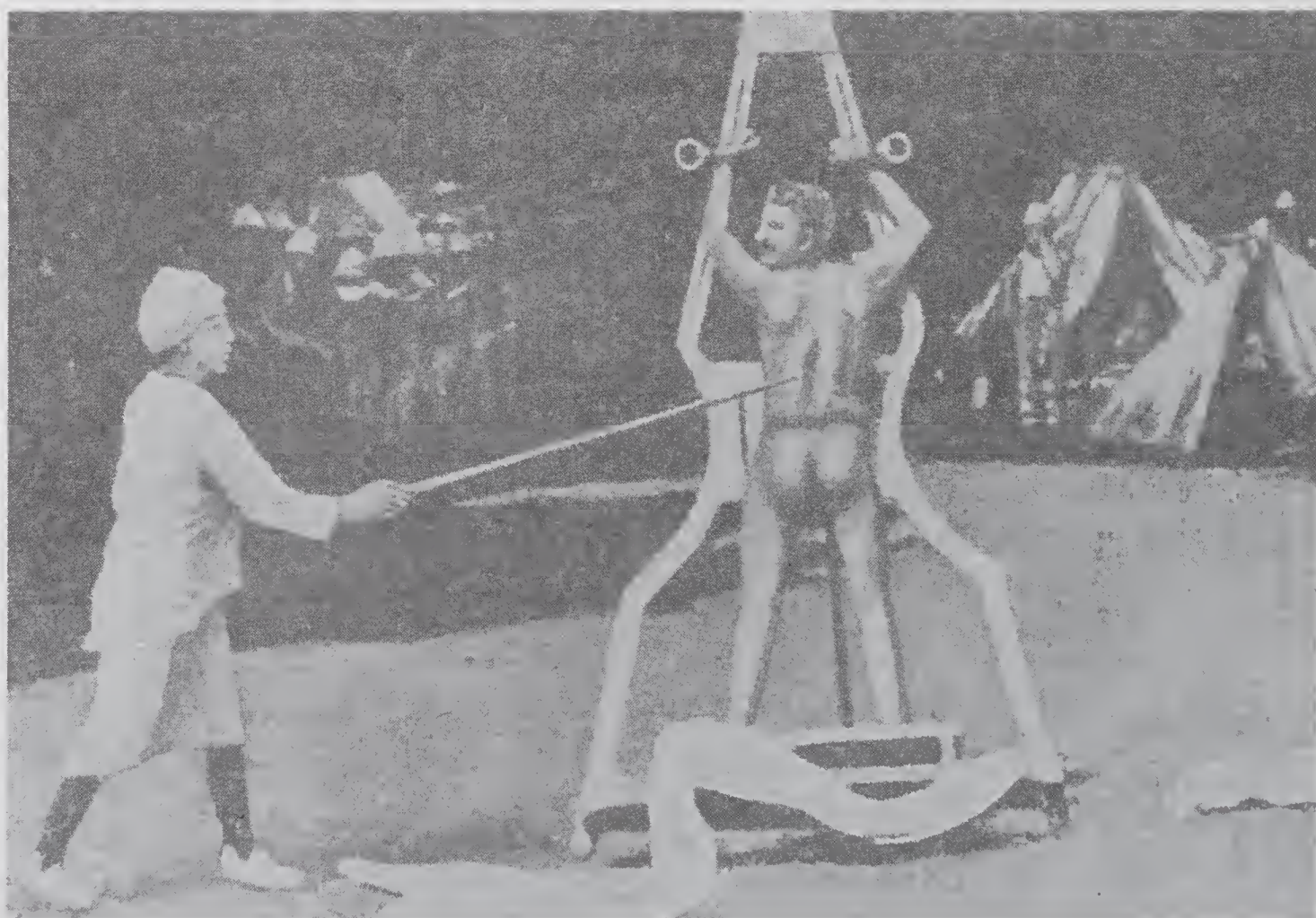
The street in Amritsar where the residents were made to crawl in April 1919





The gallows erected at Kasur in April 1919

Public flogging in the Punjab during April 1919





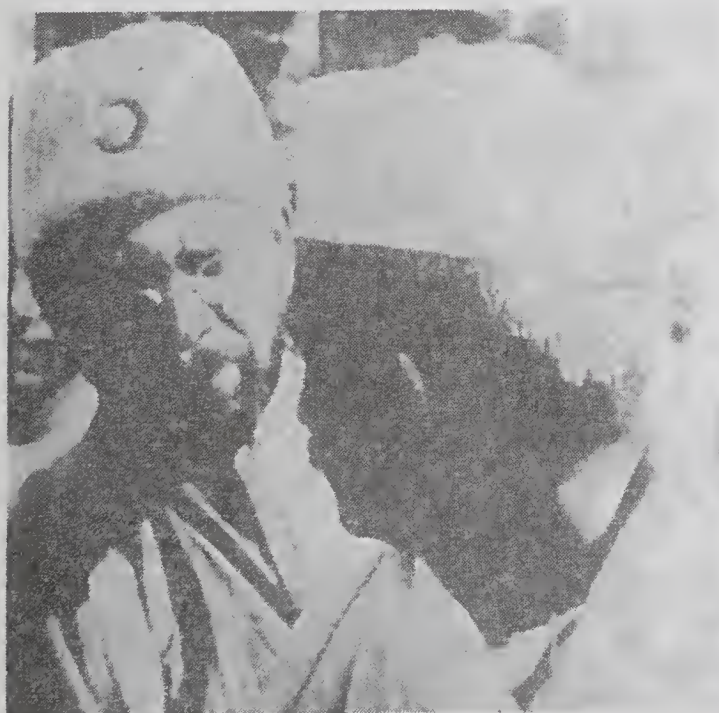
Mahatma Gandhi



Gandhiji addressing a meeting at Kalka

The brothers Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali

Gandhiji with Maulana Mohamed Ali



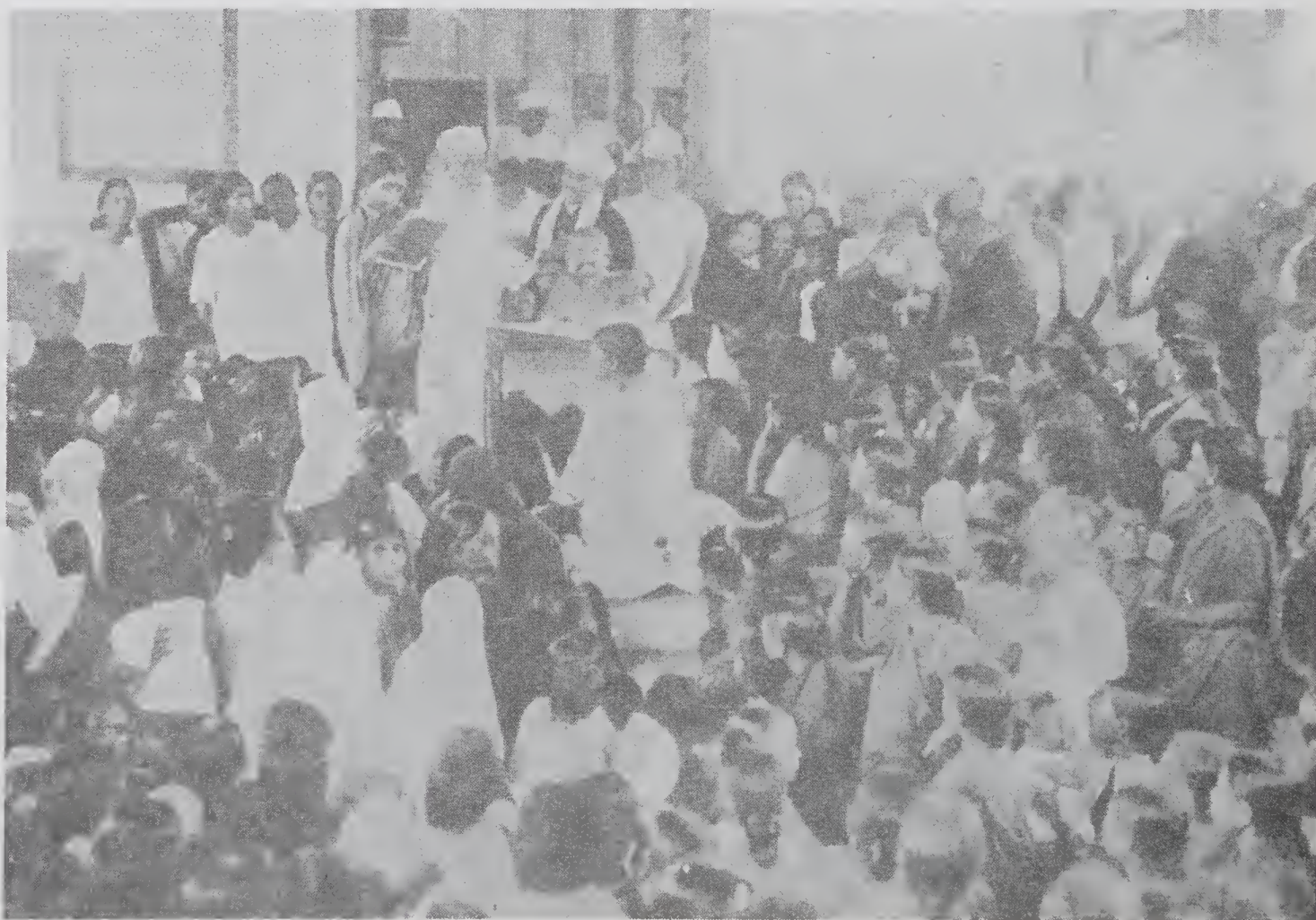


C.R. Das



Jawaharlal Nehru

Mahatma Gandhi addressing a meeting of women in Madras, 1921



NON COOPERATION & KHILAFAT MOVEMENT 1921



'Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement' — A sketch

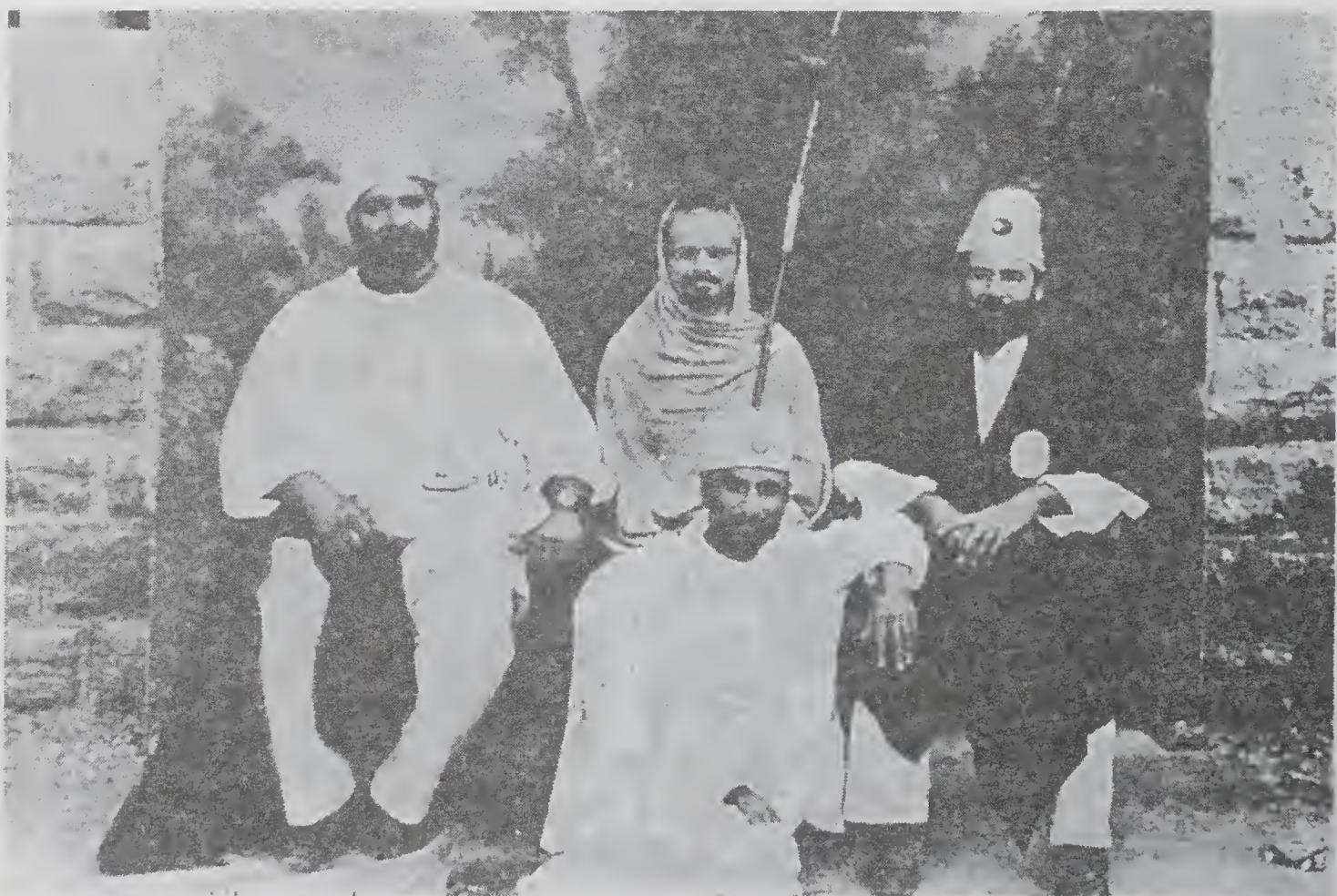
Khilafat Volunteers in 1921





Hakim Ajmal Khan addressing a Khilafat meeting at Bombay, 1920

Ali Brothers with the Shankaracharya of Sharda peeth and Saif-ud-din Kitchlew



REMEMBER 30th JUNE

ONE CRORE

MEN

ONE CRORE

MONEY

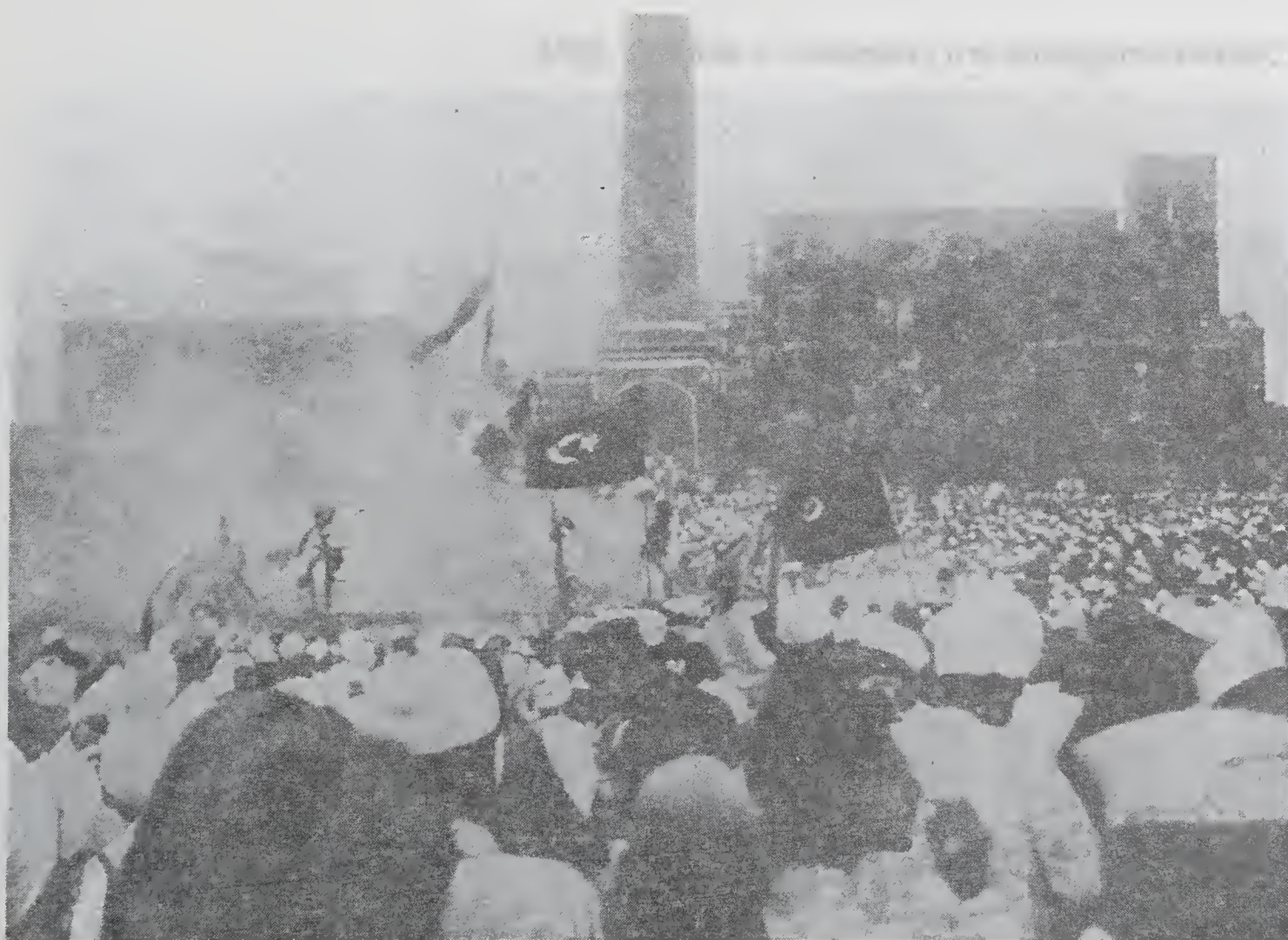
TWENTY LACS

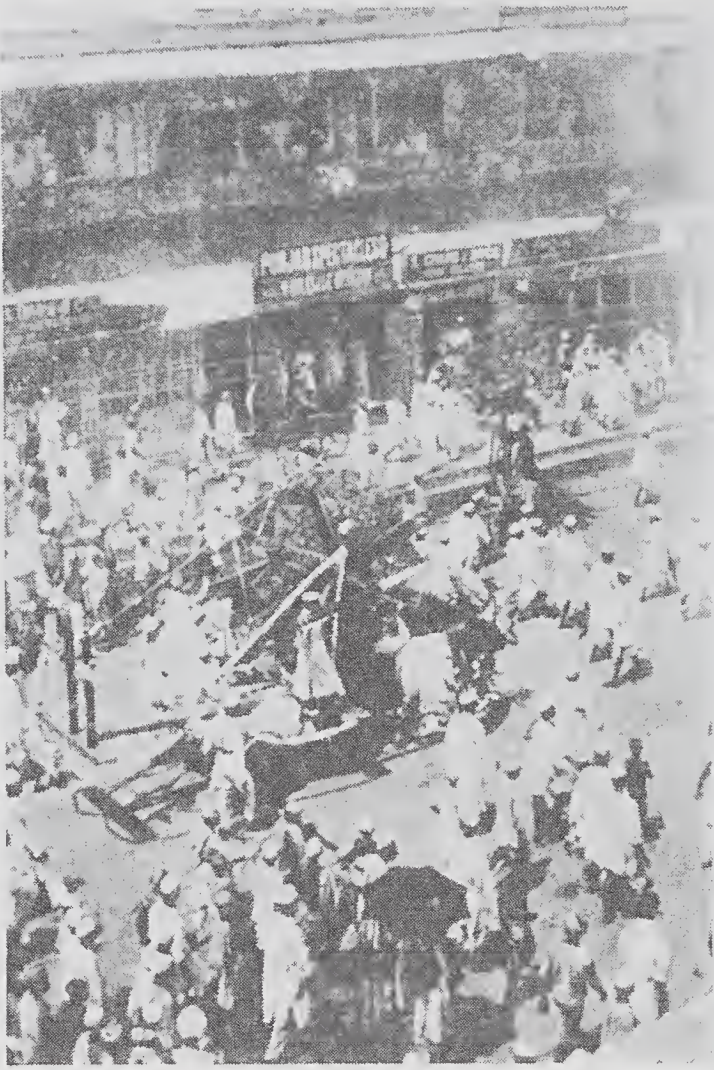
CHARKAS

"It will be nothing short of tragedy if we do not fulfil this programme before the end of the Month"—GANDHI.

A publicity poster during the Non-Cooperation Movement

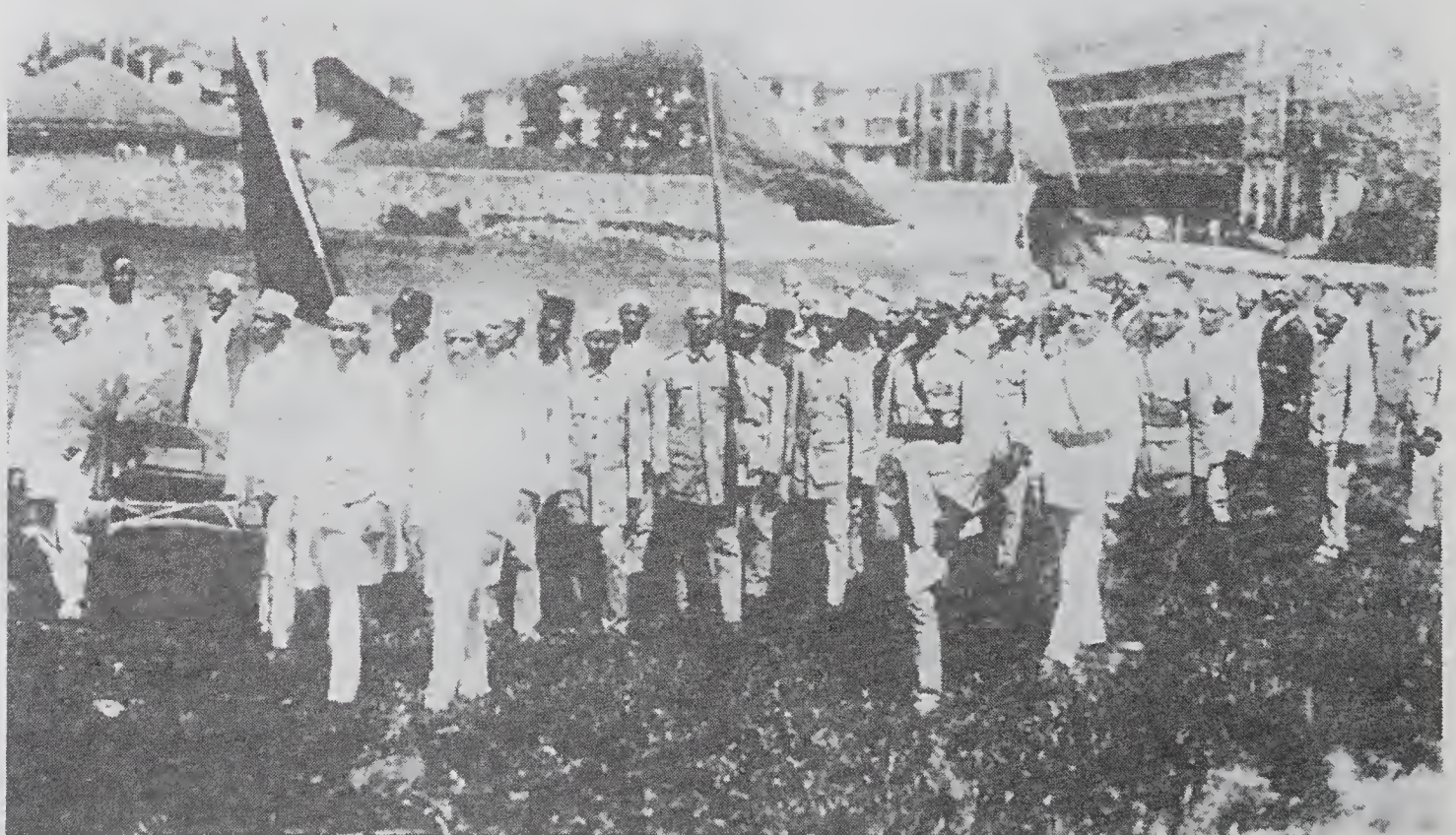
Bonfire of foreign cloth in Bombay, 1921





*Spinning Wheel being carried in procession
in Delhi, 1921*

Charkha being taken in a procession in Bombay, 1921





Mahatma Gandhi moving the main resolution at the Ahmedabad Congress, 1921

Ahmedabad Congress in Session, 1921





The cell in Sabarmati prison where Gandhiji was kept as an under-trial in 1922

'Trial of Gandhi' — A sketch 1922





Belgaum Congress in Session, 1924

Jawaharlal Nehru at the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, Brussels, 1927





A view of Madras Congress Session, 1927

Boycott of Simon Commission, 1928





*Anti-Simon Commission demonstration of 30 October 1928 led by Lala Lajpat Rai
— A sketch*

*Lala Lajpat Rai with the injuries received
while leading an anti-Simon
demonstration on 30 October 1928*



Bhagat Singh, a revolutionary nationalist





Ram Prasad Bismil, a revolutionary nationalist



Chandra Shekhar Azad, a revolutionary nationalist

Ashfaq Ullah, a revolutionary nationalist



B.K. Dutt, a revolutionary nationalist





Pritilata Wadedar, a revolutionary nationalist



Surya Sen, a revolutionary nationalist



Jatin Das, a revolutionary nationalist



Gopinath Saha, a revolutionary nationalist



Sardar Patel as leader of the Bardoli Satyagraha, 1928



Motilal Nehru at the Calcutta Congress Session, 1928

Out-going and in-coming Congress Presidents, 1929



Jawaharlal Nehru on horseback during the Lahore Congress Session, 1929





Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the Lahore Congress Session, 1929

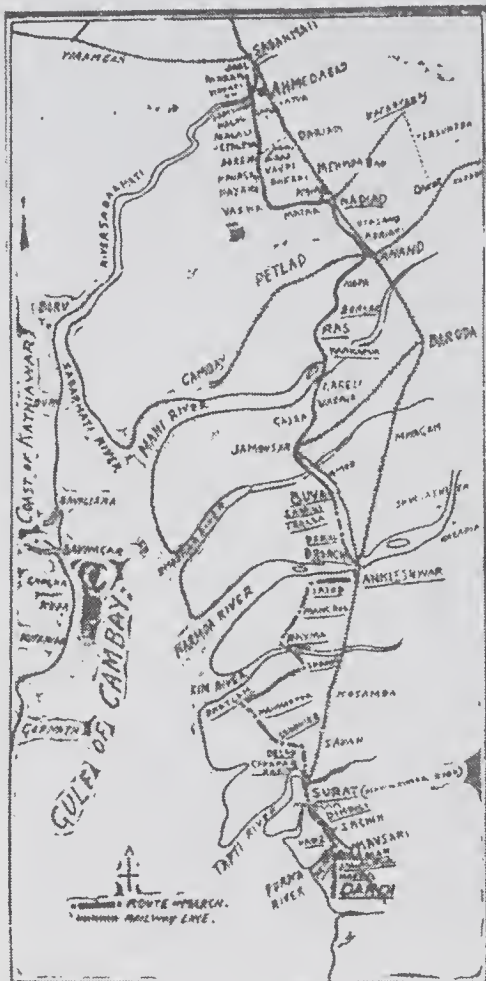
*India's declaration of independence,
26 January 1930*



Dandi March in progress, 1930



ROUTE OF MAHATMA'S MARCH



Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi — a sketch of the Dandi March route



Sarojini Naidu receiving Gandhiji at Dandi

Gandhiji breaking the salt law by picking up a lump of natural salt at Dandi



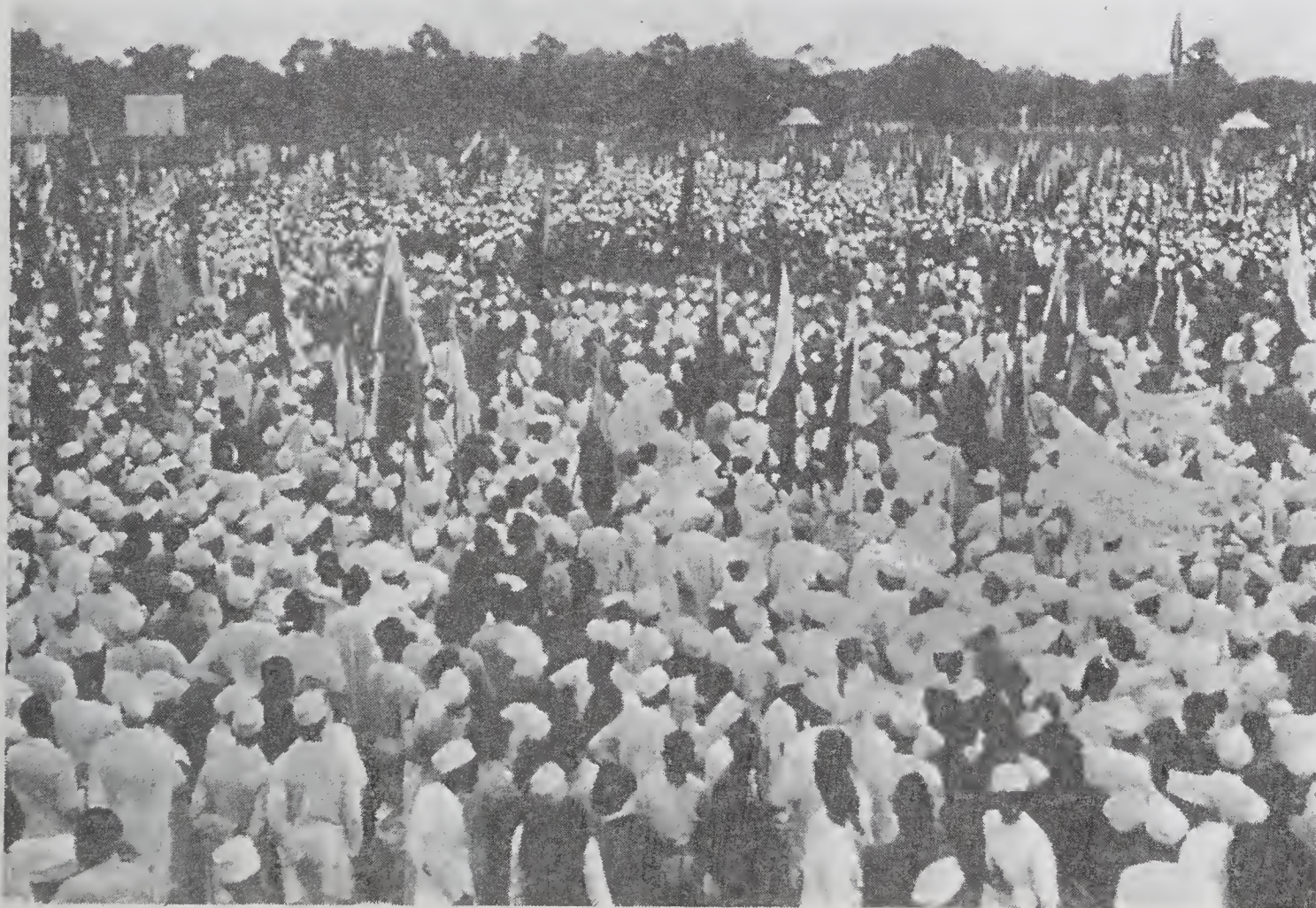
The mass raid on Dharasana Salt Depot led by Sarojini Naidu, 1930





Procession of Muslims of Bombay in support of Salt Satyagraha, 1930

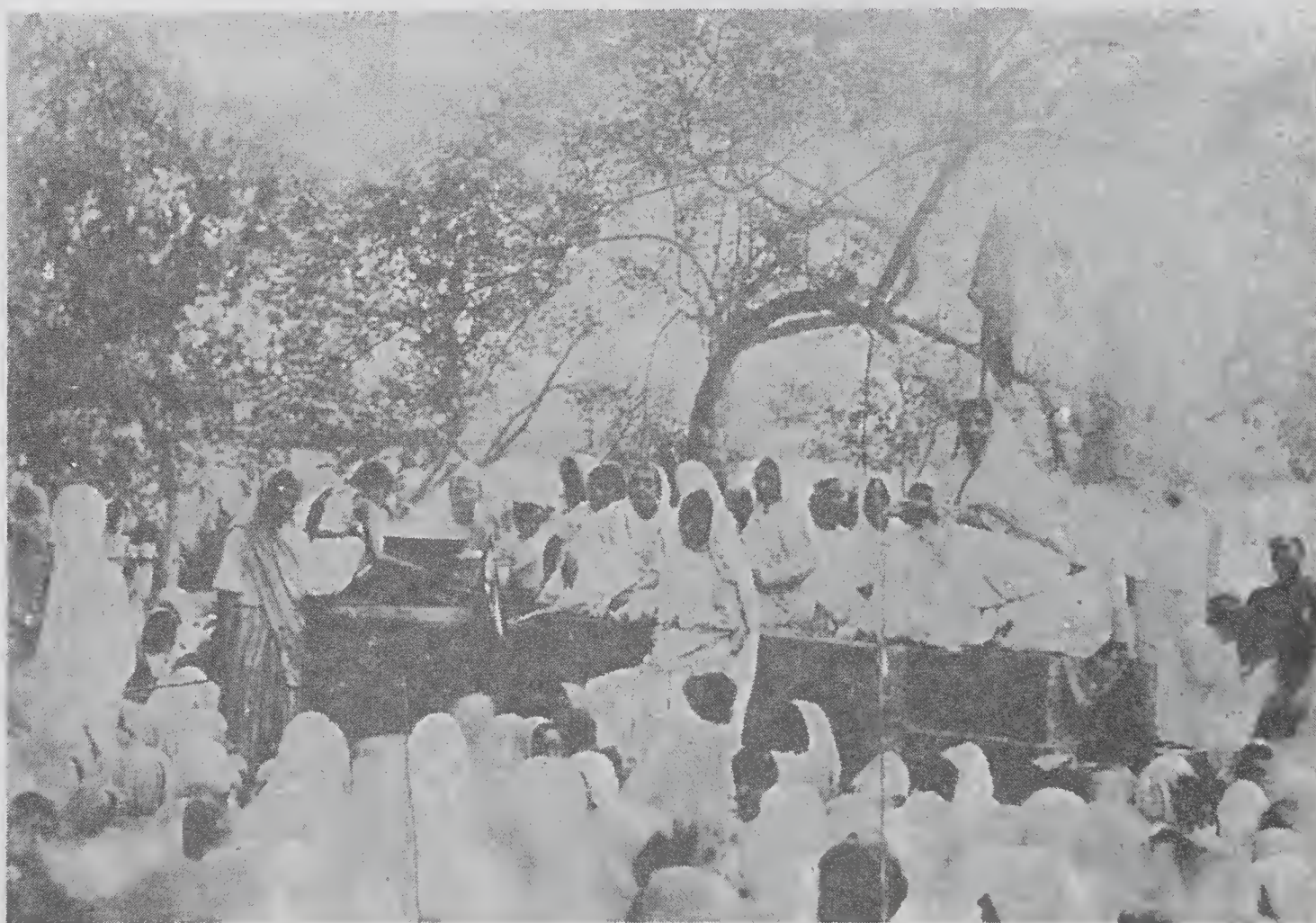
Flag salutation ceremony on the Esplanade Maidan, Calcutta, 1930





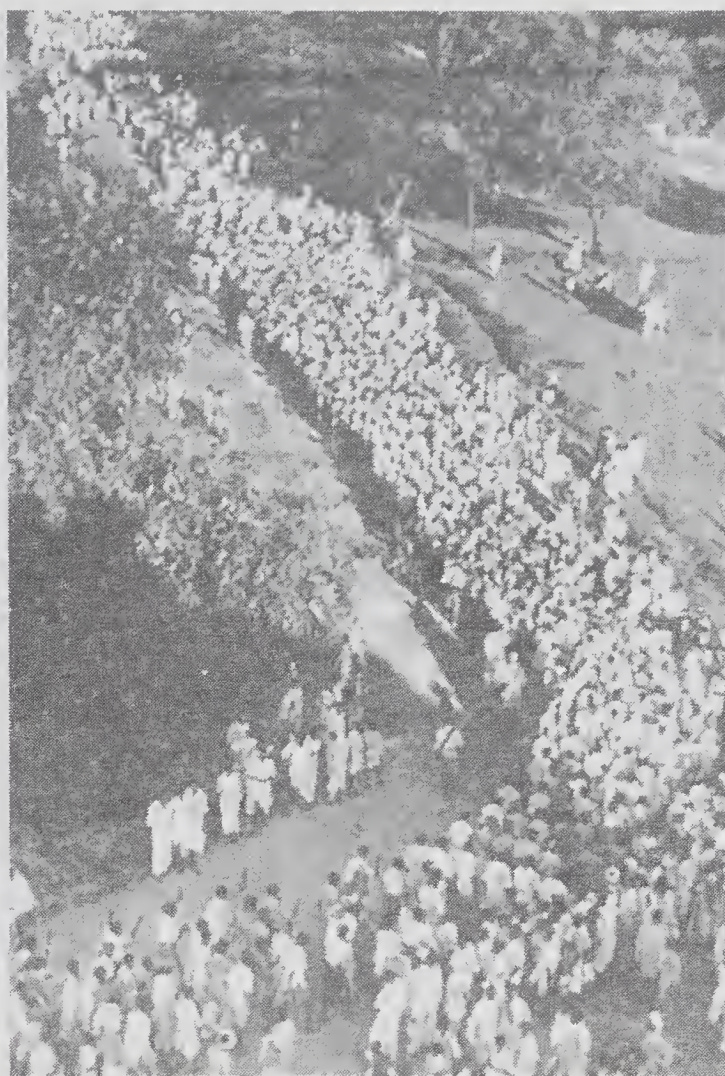
People watching manufacture of contraband salt at Chowpatty, Bombay, 1930

Preparation of contraband salt at Allahabad, 1930





A huge procession from Agashe to Aranla organised to prepare contraband salt, 1930



A view of mass participation in the Salt Satyagraha, 1930

Gandhi & Co. Salt — a cartoon by Low



Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan during the civil disobedience movement





Meeting of Khudai Khidmatgars in 1930

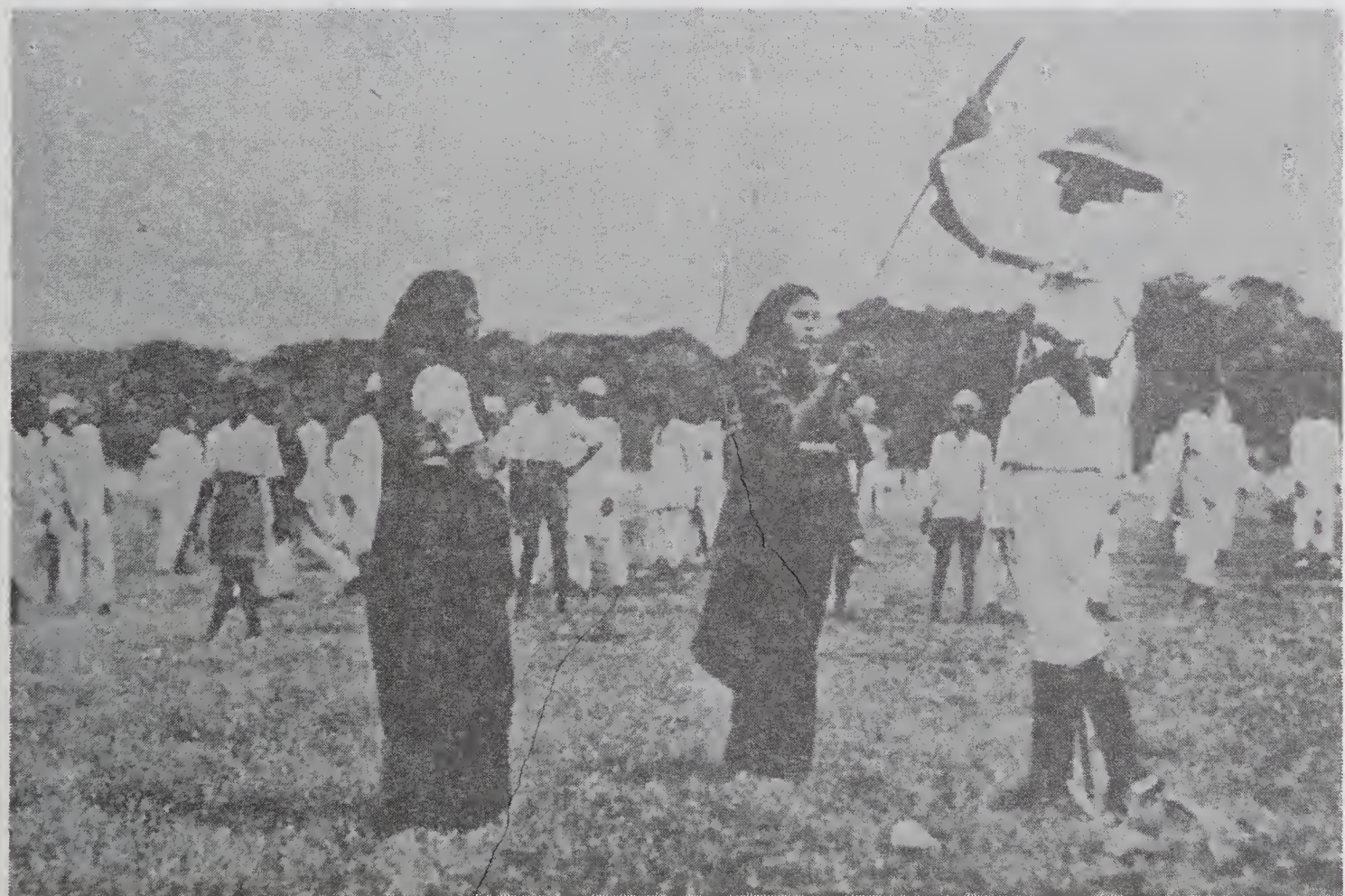
A scene of police brutality during the struggle, 1930





Clash between police and women volunteers during the struggle, 1930-31

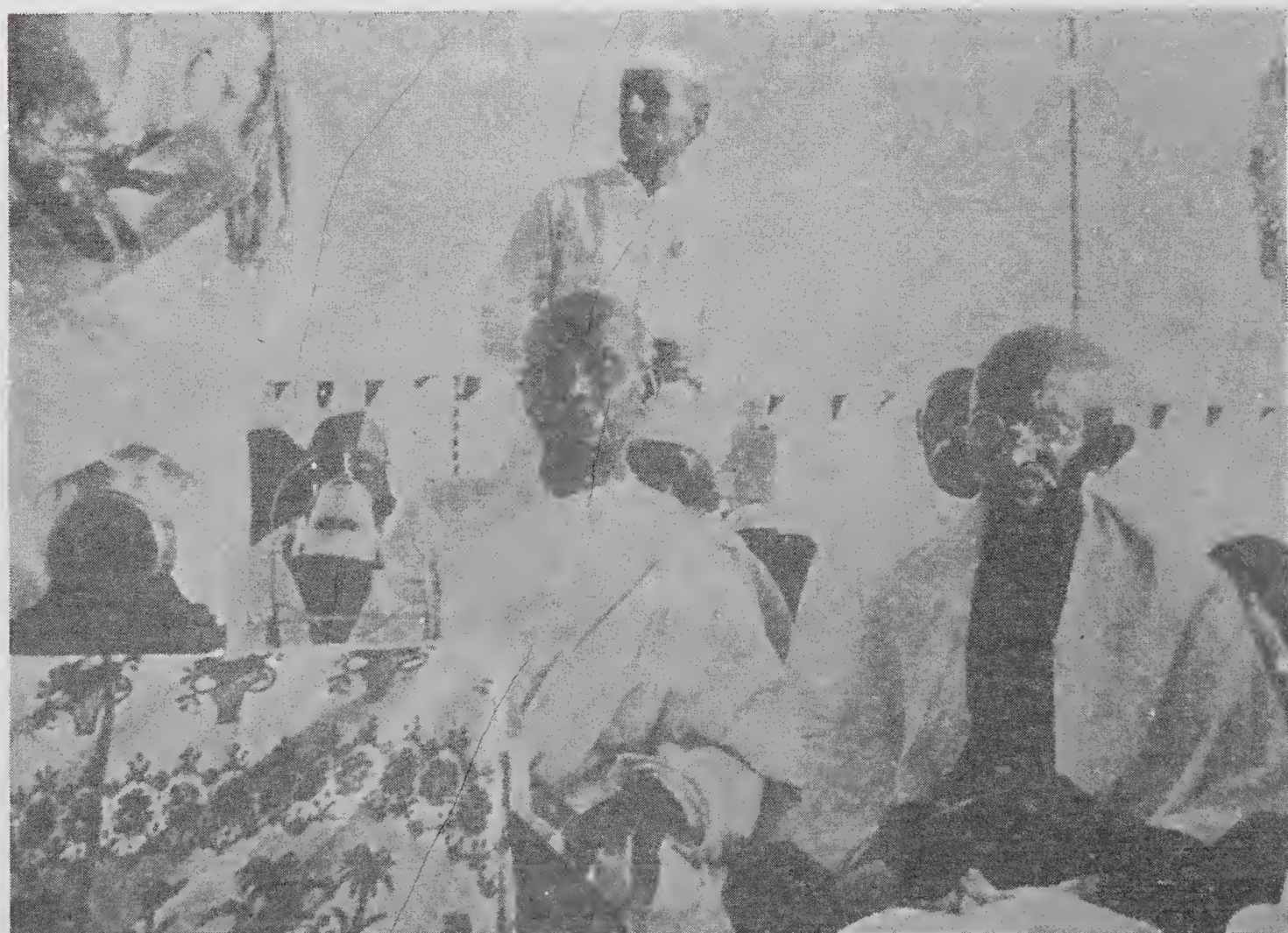
Scene of police atrocities on women volunteers during the 1930-31

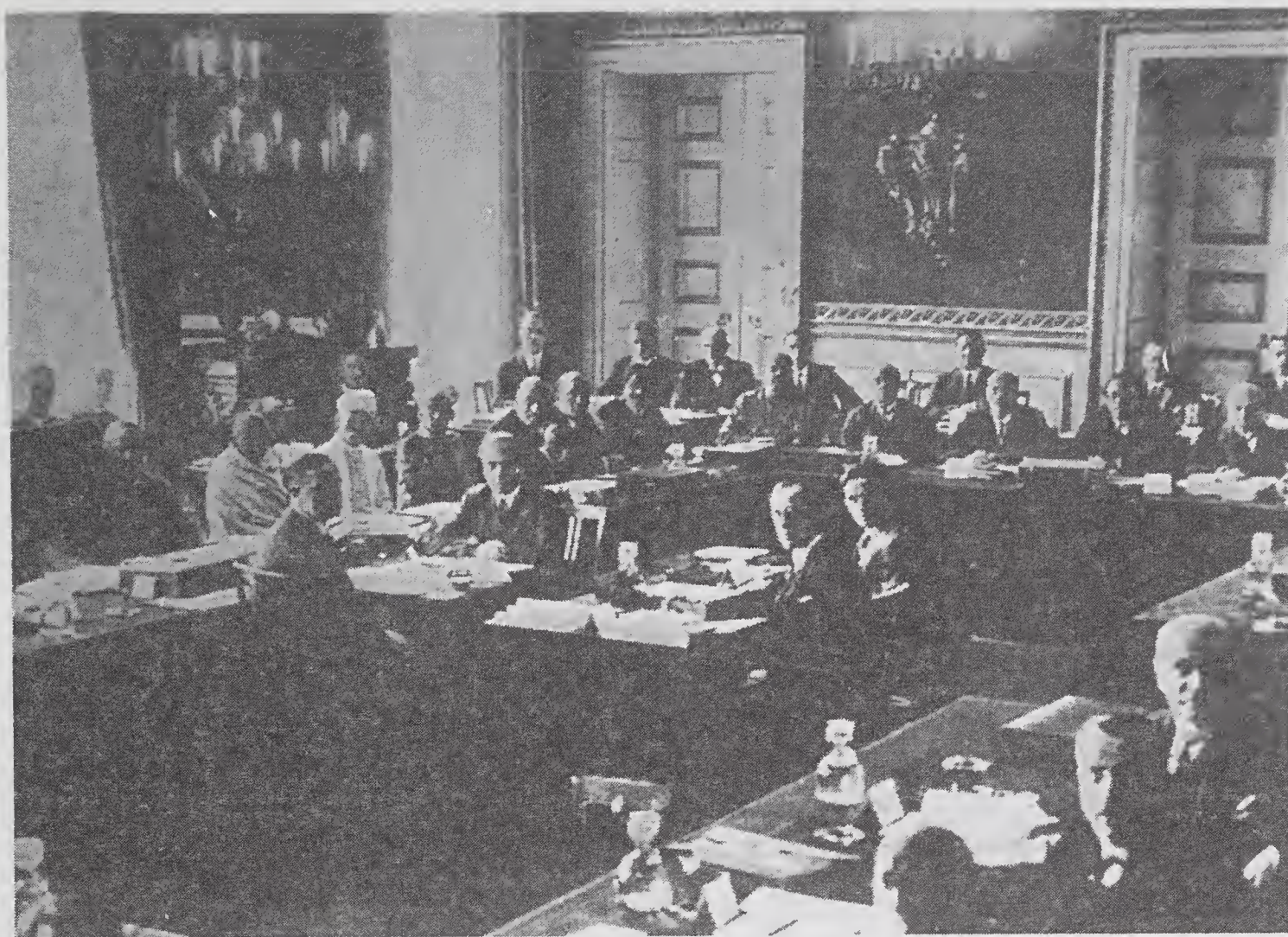




*Gandhiji hoisting the National Flag at
Ahmedabad after his release, March 1931*

Karachi Congress in Session, 1931





The opening session of the Second Round Table Conference in London, 1931

Mr MacDonald and India — a cartoon





Gandhiji arriving to attend the Congress Session in Bombay, 1934



Mahatma Gandhi, 1935

Chapter V

The Congress and Nationalist Sikh Politics (1920-1937)

Mohinder Singh

AMONG THE REGIONAL manifestations of Indian nationalism, the Akalis' movement was, perhaps, the strongest. Over thirty thousand people courted arrest in the Non-cooperation Movement at the provincial level in the first phase of the struggle in 1920-5. That is why Mahatma Gandhi, who was mainly responsible for bringing the Akali Sikhs into the fold of the larger movement of non-cooperation, described the Akali victory in the Keys Affair as the 'first decisive victory for the forces of Indian nationalism'. It was Mahatma Gandhi and his lieutenants in the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Central Sikh League who were largely instrumental in the Akali leadership shifting from purely religious reform to a frontal attack on the bureaucracy which was tacitly backing the vested interests in the Sikh shrines.

The alliance of the Khilafat Muslims and the Akali Sikhs with the Indian National Congress marked a major change in the tone of provincial politics and brought large numbers of Muslims and Sikhs into the fold of nationalist activities. This chapter will discuss the role of the Akali Struggle in Punjab as a complementary movement to the larger struggle for India's freedom, and will highlight the close liaison between the regional forces and the larger movement for the country's liberation launched by the Indian National Congress.

Before attempting a discussion on the Akali Movement and the origin and development of nationalist Sikh politics through the Akali struggle, it would be relevant to discuss the circumstances leading to the religio-political awakening among the Sikhs which radicalized the Sikh masses in the province and led to their active participation in the nationalist struggle.

1. Religio-Political Awakening among the Sikhs

Though the initiative in the field of religious reform in Sikh society was taken by Baba Dayal and his followers through the Nirankari

movement,¹ it was Baba Ram Singh and his followers in the Namdhari movement,² who sowed seeds of hatred against British rule, and thus prepared the ground for the religio-political struggle of the Akalis during the early decades of the 20th century.

Persecution of the Kukas and suppression of their movement was followed by the birth of the Singh Sabha in 1873. The Singh Sabha movement and its activities had a much wider appeal for the Sikh masses and made a far greater impact. The promoters of the Singh Sabha movement were connected with other reform movements in the Punjab and were aware of similar movements in the rest of the country. They ascribed the corruption in Sikh religious and social life to lack of education among the Sikhs. They believed that religious reformation could be brought about only when the masses were made aware of their cultural heritage. The movement gained quick support from the Sikh elite, and such prominent Sikh scholars of the time as Bhais Vir Singh, Kahan Singh, Ditt Singh and Professor Gurmukh Singh joined the ranks of the Singh Sabha.³

Though the Singh Sabha aimed mainly at religious reform through the spread of education, and consciously refrained from discussing political questions or incurring the displeasure of the British rulers, the religious propaganda of some of its preachers had marked political overtones. For instance, when it was argued that vicious social customs and neglect of religion and education were the direct causes of 'the political downfall of the Sikhs', most of the preachers put it as an axiom that 'never had the Sikh community fallen so low or was in so wretched a plight as during the British rule'. And again, 'never was the education so backward, temporal resources so straitened and disease and poverty so rampant'.⁴

Following perhaps the advice of the Singh Sabha leadership, these *updeshaks* (preachers) did not hold the British Government directly responsible for the manifold social and religious ills; but it was difficult to totally dissociate 'the idea of responsibility of the Paramount Power from the deplorable state of affairs that was depicted by these preachers'.⁵ While referring to the 'halcyon days of Ranjit Singh's rule', these preachers compared the prevalent degraded conditions of the Sikhs with the past hardships under Mughal rule. It was suggested that 'this similarity in conditions under the Mughals and the British was due to the similarity in causes'.⁶

However, the major contribution of the Singh Sabha lay in the creation of a network of Khalsa schools, colleges and other centres of learning. The Singh Sabha leaders felt that the spread of education among the Sikhs needed the help and friendship of the British rulers. They, therefore, sought the patronage of the viceroy and other British

officials. Soon after the establishment of the Khalsa Diwan, Lahore, an active campaign was launched for the foundation of a central college for the Sikhs around which was to be organized a system of schools in the outlying districts. Educational activities of the Singh Sabha received ready support from the government. It was with this assistance from the British Government and the Sikh rulers of princely states that the Khalsa College was founded at Amritsar in 1892.

Though the promoters of the Khalsa College and their British patrons founded the college for purely educational advancement, the students and some of the teachers there could not escape the influence of the prevailing political unrest in the province and the growing movement of nationalism in the country. C.I.D. officials in Punjab reported that the Khalsa College had become an important centre for inculcating nationalist feelings among the students. The report pointed out that some of the teachers were addressing 'openly seditious lectures' to their students, which instilled anti-British feelings in their minds.⁷ It was perhaps due to the influence of these politically conscious teachers and the inspiration of Gokhale, Gandhi and other nationalist leaders that the students demonstrated twice against European officers who visited the college with a view to suggesting certain measures to curb the growing anti-British feeling among the students.⁸ According to an official report, the students of the Khalsa College were so excited at Gokhale's visit to Amritsar that they unyoked the horses of his carriage and themselves drew the vehicle from the railway station to the college.⁹

To check the growing political consciousness and feelings of nationalism in the college, the Government of the Punjab reconstituted the college managing committee so as to ensure better official control over its affairs. Under a new arrangement, the Commissioner of the Lahore Division was made ex-officio President and the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, the Director of Public Instructions, the Political Agent, Phulkian States, and the European Principal became ex-officio members of the new managing committee. With all the members being nominated and removable by the government, the college virtually passed into government hands. As a result, some of the earlier members of the committee and the teachers with nationalist leanings, were made to resign. The action of the government created resentment among the Sikh nationalist leadership. Master Sunder Singh tried to arouse popular feeling by asserting that the college was no longer in the hands of the Sikhs. In an anti-British pamphlet, entitled *Ki Khalsa Kalaj Sikhan da Hai?*¹⁰ and published in 1911, he accused the British Government of 'having robbed the Sikhs of their college just as they had, by gross breach of faith, previously swallowed up the Punjab'. The pamphlet also denounced the pro-British Sikh leaders like Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia

as 'traitors for their having brooked the official interference in the Khalsa College'.¹¹

The socio-religious movements among the Sikhs also exposed the evils which had slowly crept into the Sikh social and religious life and indirectly inculcated in them a desire for reform. Growing political unrest in the Punjab in the early 20th century, the influence of the nationalist press and, above all, the growing forces of nationalism in the country, further added to the growing unrest among the masses and prepared the ground for the coming Akali struggle.

Agrarian Unrest in the Punjab

Discontent among the Punjabis with British rule, which had been felt even before the occupation of the Punjab by the British in 1849, found its first organized expression in the form of agrarian unrest in 1907. The trouble in the canal colonies, which was mainly agrarian in character, was the outcome of deep-rooted economic and political discontent, and found an outlet in the form of protest against the Colonization Bill which, apart from altering the earlier agreements made with the settlers, also provided for higher rates of land revenue and irrigation charges. This was perhaps the first instance in the Punjab in which the rural masses, especially the Sikh peasantry in the canal colonies, gave expression to their discontent against the policies of the British Government. The nationalist press, in and outside Punjab, supported their cause and demanded withdrawal of the bill. The occasion was also utilized by the nationalist leaders in the Punjab, like Lala Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh and Syed Hyder Mirza, to make the peasantry politically conscious, Banke Dayal's popular Punjabi verses, *Pagri Sambhal Oh Jatta*, *Pagri Sambhal Ohe* (Oh peasant, guard your turban) reminded the Punjabi peasantry of its miserable economic conditions and exploitation at the hands of the pro-British landed aristocracy and stirred them to action against the injustices of British rule.¹²

The authorities in the Punjab took strong action against the agitators and their leaders, deporting Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. But when the higher authorities in Delhi realized that the measure had caused uneasiness among the Sikh soldiers, many of whom had families and relatives in the colonies, the viceroy repealed the Colonization Bill. Though the vetoing of the bill and the reduction in the land and water rates temporarily checked popular agitation, the agrarian unrest had exploded the myth of the 'loyalty' of the Punjabis and marked the beginning of political unrest in the Punjab.

The Ghadr Propaganda and its Impact

The revolutionary Ghadr propaganda made major headway in the Punjab

during the First World War. Punjabi emigrants to the USA were the largest component of the Ghadr movement. Sohan Singh Bhakna was the founder-President of the Association of Hindustani Workers of the Pacific Coast, which came to be popularly known as the Ghadr party because of its organizers' attempts to create *ghadr* (rebellion) in India at the time of the First World War. During the war, the Ghadrites made serious efforts to develop contacts with Indian soldiers, particularly the Sikh regiments in the Punjab. Some of the Ghadrite leaders set out for India in August 1914. They fixed 21 February 1915 as the date for simultaneous risings in the military cantonments at Peshawar, Ferozepur, Ambala, Faizabad and elsewhere. But their plans leaked to the authorities who were able to take timely measures and thus foil their designs.¹³

Efforts of the Ghadrites to foster an uprising in India failed because of organizational weakness, lack of support from the masses, and opposition from the pro-British leaders among the Sikhs, and also the disapproval of their programme by Mahatma Gandhi. Nevertheless, they were able to make a major contribution towards the articulation of discontent against the British rule by inspiring many people through their patriotic and revolutionary propaganda. Apart from instilling revulsion for foreign rule, Ghadrite activities also created a spirit of defiance of authority among the extremists in the Punjab, which later found expression in the form of the Babbar Akali Jathas during the Akali struggle for Gurdwara reform.

Post-War Discontent

The demolition of the boundary wall of Gurdwara Rakabganj, Delhi, the tragedy of Budge-Budge, the demobilization of Sikh soldiers after the war and the unsatisfactory treatment meted out to them during the war, further added to the discontent created by the Ghadrite propaganda. Apart from giving Sikh soldiers a sense of pride as a result of repeated British propaganda about the 'superior martial qualities of the Sikhs' and 'their gallant deeds', their adventures abroad during the war also broadened their outlook. Many of those who fought in West Asia and Western Europe came into contact with nationalist propaganda regarding the maltreatment of Indians in Canada and the United States because of their race and colour. They also heard about the infamous conspiracy trials and the hangings and deportations of Sikhs and other Indians. Both during the war and later, on their return to India, they heard from their fellow villagers and relatives about the internment of nearly 5,000 of their folk for their sympathy with the Ghadrites; of the enforcement of the Indent System, under which every village was forced to provide a certain number of recruits, and of the coercion used to raise

funds for the war. After their demobilization, most of the Sikh soldiers returned to their native villages only to add further to the growing woes of their people at home. Arbitrary cuts in the pensions of these soldiers, their disappointment at the non-fulfilment of various promises of rewards made to them for loyal services during the war and other disabilities, rendered these people utterly disillusioned and thus added to the growing economic and political unrest in the province.

Rowlatt Bills and Subsequent Agitation

In this climate of depression and discontent, the Government added fuel to fire by introducing the Rowlatt Bills in January 1919. Mahatma Gandhi, who had earlier been leading the agitation against the bills, gave a call for complete *hartal* to mark people's resentment and disapproval of the official measures. It was observed in all the important towns of the Punjab on 30 March and again on 6 April 1919. In Amritsar, Doctors Kitchlew and Satyapal took a leading part in organizing the *hartal* in which people belonging to different communities took part. This communal harmony, combined with the fact of growing political discontent among the Sikhs, seems to have caused concern in official circles. As a result, the two leaders were quietly whisked away to Dharamsala. As soon as the news of their deportation reached the people in the city, they assembled in a procession and marched to the deputy commissioner's bungalow to register their protest. The police tried to stop them and, in trying to disperse them, killed half a dozen people and wounded thirty. The action of the police infuriated the people who retaliated by attacking European officials and civilians and also official buildings in the city. In this riot, five Englishmen were killed and an English lady missionary assaulted. Disturbances occurred in other parts of the province also.¹⁴

The Impact of Jallianwala Bagh

This outburst of the popular unrest created panic among British officials, who had so far banked on the myth of the 'loyalty of the Punjabis'. Two days after the happenings at Amritsar, Brigadier-General R.E.H. Dyer arrived there with troops and armoured cars. The next afternoon, when he marched his troops through the main streets of the city to overawe the masses, he found the people reacting with '*Hindu-Musalman ki Jai*'.¹⁵ The General proclaimed a state of emergency in the city and declared all meetings and assemblies illegal. The local Congress Committee, which had already announced a meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh on 13 April 1919, did not cancel the original programme. In addition to the people who had gone to attend the Congress meeting, a large number of Sikh villagers who had gone to the Golden Temple to celebrate Baisakhi, and were unaware of the proclamation, also reached Jallianwala Bagh.

As soon as the General received the news of the meeting at Jallianwala Bagh he marched there with a platoon of infantry, 'to prevent', in his own words, 'further rebellious acts'.¹⁶ He occupied the only entrance/exit to the Bagh and, without giving any warning to the people assembled there, opened fire, killing 379 and wounding over 2,000.¹⁷

While the country was busy condemning this brutal action and was engulfed in a wave of shock, horror and consternation, Arur Singh, the government-appointed *Sarbrah* of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, invited the general to the temple and tried to whitewash his bloodstains by honouring him with a *saropa* and by declaring him a 'Sikh'. The dialogue which took place between Arur Singh and other priests and General Dyer is worth quoting here:

'Sahib', they said, 'you must become a Sikh even as Nikalsayan Sahib became a Sikh.'

The General thanked them for the honour, but he objected that he could not, as a British Officer, let his hair grow long.

Arur Singh laughed, 'We will let you off the long hair,' he said. General Dyer offered another objection.

'But I cannot give up smoking.'

'That you must do,' said Arur Singh.

'No,' said the General, 'I am very sorry, but I cannot give up smoking.'

The priest conceded, 'We will let you give it up gradually.'

'That I promise you,' said the General, 'at the rate of one cigarette a year.'¹⁸

According to Ian Colvin, the biographer of General Dyer, the priests proceeded with the pseudo-initiation. 'General Dyer and Captain Briggs were invested with the five *Kakas*, the sacred emblems of the Sikh brotherhood, and so became 'Sikhs.'¹⁹

While the tragedy of Jallianwala lent an impetus to the struggle for the country's freedom, the perfidious action of Arur Singh brought home to the advocates of reform the urgency of putting a stop to the prevailing system of Gurdwara Management. Of the various factors contributing to the growing discontentment among the Sikh community, the fact of the gross misuse of their premier shrine at Amritsar at the hands of the government-nominated *Sarbrah* proved the proverbial last straw on the camel's back and thus set the stage for Sikh struggle for gurdwara reform and, through this, their active participation in the larger movement of non-cooperation in the country.

2. Origin of the Gurdwara Reform Movement

While evil practices in the management of Sikh shrines were prevalent much before the launching of the Gurdwara reform movement, no organized effort for its reform could be taken up before the early decades of the 20th century. The growing religious and political awakening

among the Sikhs created a passion for reform among a section of the community described in official circles as 'Neo-Sikhs' or the *Tat Khalsa*.²⁰ Under the changed climate, these reformers felt that they need no longer remain helpless spectators to the corrupt practices at their religious places. Initiative for reform was taken by the Sikh and pro-Sikh newspapers. As early as 1905, some of the newspapers like the *Khalsa Advocate*, the *Khalsa Samachar*, the *Khalsa Sewak* and *The Punjab* began complaining about the management of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, and other important Sikh shrines. These papers expressed grief and pain at the gurdwaras and other trust holdings being converted into private properties of the mahants and also other abuses in the prevailing system of management. *The Punjab* reminded the mahants that 'the Gurdwaras belong to the Sikh community and not the priests, who are mere servants of the panth'.²¹

Along with the Sikh press, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Singh Sabhas in different areas and the so-called natural leaders of the Sikhs, composed of the Sikh aristocracy and other title-holders, also made some attempts through their memorials to seek help from the government in the purification of the Sikh shrines. Various resolutions were passed by the Singh Sabhas condemning the base actions of the mahants and urging them to improve their ways. But neither the mahants nor the officials paid any attention to these resolutions and memorials which were couched in a humble tone. Thus, when in the Sikh Educational Conference held at Jullundur on 10-12 April 1914, Sardar Harchand Singh, a militant Sikh leader from Lyallpur, wanted a strong resolution to be passed protesting against the official action in demolishing the wall of Gurdwara Rakabganj,²² Delhi, not only was his resolution disallowed but he was even compelled to leave the conference, along with Sardar Teja Singh Samundri and others of his way of thinking.²³ The Chief Khalsa Diwan tried to hush up the matter as it involved condemnation of the British Government. But on noticing that the volume of opposition was growing and their inaction was damaging their position, the Chief Khalsa Diwan leaders called a general body meeting on 31 May 1914, in the Town Hall, Amritsar, and passed a mild resolution: 'That the Government be humbly requested to restore the land and enclosure of the wall of the garden to their original condition'. But lest even this demand antagonize the government, the resolution added, 'But if, for reasons of state, it is considered essential to change their form, then in the opinion of the Committee it will be acceptable. . . .'²⁴ Similarly in the matters relating to the management of the Khalsa College, Sikh representation on the Councils and reform in the management of the Sikh shrines, they would not press their demands beyond the point where official displeasure began.

Realizing that mere passing of resolutions did not help the community, some Sikhs of advanced political opinions advocated the adoption of other methods. Boycotting of the temples, exerting greater public pressure on the mahants and even litigation, were all tried in turn but to no success. Boycott could not prove effective as the mahants of most of the gurdwaras in which reforms were sought received an enormous income from the tax-free jagirs attached to almost all the historic shrines, yielding yearly incomes of lakhs of rupees²⁵ in those days. Some of the mahants earned a daily income of Rs 200, and could therefore withstand the stoppage of offerings by the devotees in case of boycott. The method of exerting greater public pressure on the mahants proved an equal failure as they would readily promise to improve their ways when confronted with strong public pressure, but would revert to their old ways as soon as the pressure of public criticism subsided. The reformers then thought of bringing about improvements in the gurdwara management through litigation.

Reform through Litigation

In the Charitable and Religious Endowment Act (Act XIV of 1920), some rights were given to the beneficiaries in the control and management of temples. Therefore, the Sikh reformers, in the beginning, went to the courts of law in the hope of obtaining control of their sacred places through them. Here too disappointment was in store for them. The courts could not help because the law made it obligatory on the part of two or more beneficiaries of a temple to join hands to go to the Deputy Commissioner for permission to sue the mahants guilty of misappropriation of funds. The Deputy Commissioner, being a supporter of the vested interests, used his discretion to deny the necessary permission in most of the cases. In other cases, where the reformers succeeded in obtaining the required permission, the cases could not be pursued for want of exorbitant court fees prescribed by the judicial machinery. Moreover, the law followed its own course, which was very slow. The reformers, full of passion for reform as they were, did not have the patience to wait indefinitely, till the law could help them get possession of their temples. Even if the process was to be quickened, this could not have helped the Akali reformers, as, with the passage of time, most of the mahants had managed to get themselves registered as 'owners' of the trusts rather than their custodians.

Having been convinced of the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of legal remedies, the reformers now organized themselves in the form of local Akali Jathas.²⁶ Peaceful agitation was adopted as a weapon to fight the vested interests in the Sikh shrines on the one hand, and the bureaucratic machinery in the Punjab, on the other. This new weapon proved very

effective and the Akali reformers were able to dislodge the mahants and other vested interests in the Sikh shrines from their hereditary positions, and the government from the unreasonable stands.

To begin with, the agitation for reform was initiated by the local Akali jathas in their respective areas but soon two representative bodies of the Sikhs, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal, came into existence with four objectives:

- (i) to bring the Sikh religious places under Panthic control and management,
- (ii) to do away with the permanent position of the mahants, thus ending their irresponsibility,
- (iii) to utilize the property and income of the gurdwaras for the purposes for which they were founded, and
- (iv) to practise the Sikh religion according to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as preserved in the Adī Granth.²⁷

In the course of their five-year struggle, these two bodies were not only able to obtain control over all the important Sikh shrines through peaceful agitation and passive sufferings, but also to strengthen the forces of nationalism in the Punjab by ejecting the mahants, the government-appointed managers and other vested interests in the Sikh community and by carrying the Congress programme and ideology to the Sikh masses in rural Punjab.

As a detailed narrative of the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the liberation of three hundred and odd gurdwaras by the Akalis in the course of their struggle is not within the scope of the present work, it would be sufficient here to merely mention some of the important Gurdwaras which were taken over by the Akali reformers.²⁸

3. Gurdwara Reform

Chronologically the first Gurdwara to be reformed through peaceful agitation was Babe-di-Bar, Sialkot (now in Pakistan). When Harnam Singh, its mahant, died, his widow had her minor son appointed as successor under the guardianship of one Ganda Singh, an honorary magistrate. There was a wave of resentment among the Sikhs throughout the Punjab against this action, and various Singh Sabhas sent telegrams to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab conveying their protest against this action. The collector, however, decided to ignore all popular opposition and sanctioned the mutation in favour of the minor mahant Gurcharan Singh. The reformers reacted by filing a civil suit in the court of the District Judge who ordered the plaintiffs to pay a court fee of Rs 50,000 by 30 August 1920. As the reformers could not collect such a huge amount, their plaint was rejected.

Having thus failed to achieve their object through recourse to law, the reformers resorted to peaceful agitation. The Sikhs of the locality organized themselves and formed a Khalsa Sewak Jatha to reform the gurdwaras in the city. Under the new programme of action, they started holding services in the gurdwara. Ganda Singh placed many hurdles in the way of the reformers, but they succeeded in taking over the control of the shrine and re-starting the system of free *langar* which had been stopped by the new mahant. On 5 October 1920, the Sikhs held a big diwan and selected a permanent committee of thirteen members for the control of the gurdwara. Some new developments in the affairs of the Golden Temple and Akal Takht, meanwhile, diverted the attention of the reformers and the arena of struggle shifted from a relatively small town to the Sikh headquarters at Amritsar.

The Golden Temple and the Akal Takht

Corrupt and non-Sikh practices in the precincts of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht at Amritsar, and official control over its management, had been a source of great discontent among the Sikhs long before the beginning of the movement for reform. While the reformers were anxious to free these central seats of the Sikh religion from evil influences and from official control as early as possible, the British authorities in the Punjab resisted any effort at reform or change in the existing system of management, which would deprive it of the privilege of using (rather misusing) the religious places of the Sikhs to consolidate their power and to weaken their political opponents. History is full of such instances wherein the Government-appointed sarbrahs of the Golden Temple were often used for glorifying British rule and its functionaries. Moreover, with the weakening of Sikh control over the management and the increasing hold of officialdom, the manager and the priest started taking their cue from the deputy commissioner and ignored Sikh opinion and sentiments in the day-to-day affairs of the temple. The government-appointed sarbrah, having kept the appointing authority appeased, spent his time in appropriating the huge wealth of the shrine, and, consequently, neglected his daily religious duties. Costly gifts to the temple slowly found their way to the homes of the sarbrah and other priests. The precincts began to be used by pandits and astrologers; idols were openly worshipped in the gurdwara premises. According to contemporary accounts, on *Basant* and Holi festivals the whole place degenerated into a rendezvous for the local rogues, thieves and other bad characters, and pornographic literature was freely sold.²⁹

With the growing awakening among the Sikhs in the early decades of the 20th century, they began to resent these increasingly evil influences. Realizing that any attempt at purification and improvement was not possible till the gurdwaras were freed from official control, the reformers

demanding that the Dastur-ul-Amal of the Golden Temple be so changed as to allow the Sikh community unfettered say in its management. The Sikh newspapers supported this demand with one voice. A meeting of Sikh youth on 22 December 1906 passed a resolution asking the government to hand over the control of the Durbar Sahib to the Chief Khalsa Diwan.³⁰ Similar resolutions were passed in other parts of the province also.

The outbreak of the First World War temporarily lulled the stir for reform, but as soon as it ended the question of the control of the Durbar Sahib was revived. The newly formed Central Sikh League, at a meeting held at Amritsar in 1920, referred to the long-standing grievances of the Sikhs and demanded that 'this foremost seat of Sikh faith should be placed in the hands of a representative body of the Sikhs, constituted on an elective basis and responsible for its action to the Panth at large'.³¹ Questions regarding the management of the Golden Temple were asked in the Punjab Legislative Council and the Government was requested to make the accounts public. The government tried to procrastinate and, in a communiqué dated 14 July 1920, declared that 'the question has been deferred till the implementation of the Reform Scheme in the Punjab Legislative Council when the elected representatives of the Sikhs were to be consulted on the issue'.³²

But this communiqué failed to allay the growing discontent and unrest among the Sikhs. The reformers once again organized public meetings, passed resolutions against official inaction, and demanded immediate resignation of the government-appointed sarbrah. The government then tried to use force to check the rising unrest but failed, and decided to pacify the agitators by sending the sarbrah on two months' leave. This, however, did not help abate the anger of the reformers who held a massive diwan in Jallianwala Bagh and threatened to take out a mock funeral of the effigy of the sarbrah in case he failed to resign by 29 August 1920. This threat so frightened the sarbrah that he appeared before the diwan and, with folded hands, begged their forgiveness and announced that he had resigned. This incident was described in the confidential reports of the Punjab Government as a 'decisive victory for the party of reform'.³³

Meanwhile, certain fresh developments at the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht virtually brought these two shrines under *de facto* control of the reformers. As stated earlier, the priests at these temples did not like the action of the neo-Sikhs who were converting 'low-caste' persons to Sikhism and advocating their free integration into Sikh social life, including community-dining and inter-marriage. The Khalsa Biradari of Amritsar led them in a procession to the Golden Temple. The temple priests resisted their admission and refused to accept their offerings and

prasad. In the end, as the Holy Book was consulted, the controversy was settled in favour of the reformers. But this compromise by the priest of the Golden Temple was not approved by the priests of the Akal Takht, who began to vacate their seats when the neo-Sikhs proceeded towards the Akal Takht. The reform party took up the challenge and appointed their own volunteers to take charge of the ceremonies. Soon, a Provisional Committee consisting of nine members with Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, the new sarbrah, as its head, was formed.

This rapid march of events resulting in the strengthening of Panthic control over the management of the Golden Temple along with a simultaneous increase in the Akali control over a large number of gurdwaras in different parts of the province seems to have unnerved the authorities. With a view to counteracting the reported move of the Akali leadership to form a central organization of their own to control the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras, the government hastened the announcement of a Provisional Committee of 36 members for the management of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht and other nearby gurdwaras. The committee was formed in consultation with Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala. Though it included a few reformers, the majority of its members were from among the loyalists. The Akali leadership, however, did not allow this strategy of the bureaucracy to succeed and went ahead with its original programme of forming a larger central organization under the name of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC).³⁴ Though all the 36 members of the government-appointed committee were also included in the new organization, the reformers constituted a majority in the SGPC. Of its 175 members, only 40 were known to be supporters of the government. The outmanoeuvred bureaucracy had to wait for a year to implement its notions of official control over the gurdwaras, when it took over the keys of the toshakhana of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, in October 1921, only to be humbled again by the combination of the Akali-Congress nationalism.

Panja Sahib and Other Gurdwaras

During this period, local units of the Akalis had liberated some other gurdwaras from the control of their hereditary mahants. It appears that the official action in publicly announcing its decision of 'divesting itself of the control of Durbar Sahib' and professing 'sympathy for the cause of reform', greatly weakened resistance of the mahants of some smaller gurdwaras to the local jathas engaged in the work of reform. The Akali victory at Amritsar, along with the formation of the SGPC and the Shiromani Akali Dal, provided further encouragement to the local jathas. It was against this background that the struggle for reform of

Gurdwara Panja Sahib was renewed with added vigour and the shrine liberated from the hereditary control of the mahant.³⁵

Akali occupation of other gurdwaras of lesser historical significance, including Chomala Sahib, Lahore, Tham Sahib in village Jhambr Kalan of Lahore District, Khara Sauda and Kar Sahib at Nanakana, Chola Sahib in Ludhiana District, the Gurdwara of Shekhupura and Khadur Sahib in Amritsar District, soon followed. Mahants of most of these shrines on their own swore allegiance to the SGPC and agreed to serve under it. Others were compelled to do so when the cases pending in the courts were decided in favour of the reformers.

However, Akali reformers had their first baptism of fire during incidents at Durbar Sahib, Tarn Taran, in early 1921. Situated within fifteen kilometres of the city of Amritsar, this gurdwara had been under the same management as that of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht. During the days of Arur Singh, mahants of Tarn Taran became more or less independent and introduced many evil practices within the precincts of the gurdwara. After the sanctity of the Gurdwaras at Amritsar had been restored, those at Tarn Taran naturally attracted the attention of the Akali reformers. Accounts of growing evil practices there and the arrogant and indecent behaviour of the mahants towards visitors began to reach the Akali headquarters at Amritsar. One such story narrated by a woman visitor on 24 January 1921, before a general meeting of the Sikhs at the Akal Takht, is said to have created a great sensation, impelling the assembled Akalis to immediately march towards Tarn Taran to purify the place. The next morning about 40 Akalis under the leadership of Bhai Teja Singh Bhuchar reached there. The local priests, whose number is estimated to be 70, tried to provoke the Akalis but a clash was avoided through a compromise. The priests agreed to the formation of a joint committee to settle the dispute which was in fact a trick to gain time to prepare themselves for an attack. They even announced at night their decision to accept the proposals and asked the Akalis to bring a fair copy of the document to be signed by them. While the Akalis were waiting for the document to be signed, the priests instead of returning the document, mounted an attack. Some members of the jatha who were inside the gurdwara were seriously wounded and later two of them succumbed to their injuries. On receiving this news, the district magistrate, the superintendent of police and other officials rushed to the place. On finding that the Akalis were not to be blamed, they expressed sympathy for them. By an official order, the priests were barred from entering the gurdwara until the matter was finally decided by the Prabandhak Committee. The Gurdwara having thus come into hands of the reformers, a Committee of management was formed.³⁶ During the struggle for the reform of Tarn Taran the Akalis had shed

their blood for the first time. But the incident at Tarn Taran heralded, as it were, a greater tragedy soon after at Nanakana.

The Nanakana Tragedy

Nanakana, being the birth place of Guru Nanak, occupies the most important position among the Sikh holy places. Apart from the gurdwara of Janamasthan, where Nanak was born, there are over half a dozen other shrines connected with different events of the early life of the Guru. During the early decades of the 20th century, Janamasthan came to be controlled by Mahant Sadhu Ram, who was leading an irreligious and licentious life. Narain Das, who succeeded to the mahantship after the death of Sadhu Ram, followed his predecessor's bad example.

The unhappy state of affairs in Nanakana Sahib attracted the attention of the Akali reformers. To begin with, they adopted the usual method of holding diwans to discuss the deplorable conditions at Janamasthan and other gurdwaras at Nanakana and called upon the mahants to reform. One such diwan was held at Dharowali in October 1920. A resolution was passed calling upon Mahant Narain Das to improve his ways and cleanse the administration of the temple. This resolution as well as the news that the Golden Temple, Akal Takht and other gurdwaras at Amritsar had passed into the control of the reformers, made the mahant realize the impending danger. But instead of reforming or even arriving at a compromise with the Akalis, Narain Das began to recruit a strong force to resist the Akali movement. He is also believed to have had a personal interview with C.M. King, the Commissioner of Lahore Division, who is said to have given him assurance of help in the event of an Akali attack on his shrine.³⁷ Narain Das arranged a meeting at Nanakana which was attended by over sixty mahants. It was decided at the meeting not to recognize the authority of the newly formed SGPC and a parallel committee was formed with Mahant Narain Das as its president and Mahant Basant Das as the secretary. A newspaper, *Sant Sewak*, was also started from Lahore to carry on propaganda against the Akali movement.³⁸

After thus organizing the mahants against the Akali reformers, Narain Das started making large-scale preparations for 'self-defence'. Fortnightly reports from district level officials to the Punjab Government and the authorities in Delhi and London, clearly indicate hectic preparation by the mahant and the possibility of a trial of strength between the mahant's men and the Akali reformers.³⁹

Thus, on the pretext of 'self-defence' and 'fortification of the shrine from being rushed by the Akalis', Mahant Narain Das collected about 400 mercenaries, including notorious outlaws like Ranjha and Rehana,

and armed them with swords, lathis, *chhavis*, *takwas* and other lethal weapons. Arms and ammunition and kerosene were kept in ready stock. According to one of the mahant's servants, a large number of pistol cartridges were also bought by him from an arms dealer in Lahore.⁴⁰

The murderous plans of the mahant seem to have been leaked to the Akali leadership who made desperate efforts to dissuade the jathas from going to Nanakana before the planned general assembly on 4 March 1921. It was with this object that Sardar Harchand Singh, Teja Singh Samundri and Master Tara Singh were sent to Nanakana to stop the jathas from proceeding to Gurdwara Janamasthan. These leaders reached Nanakana on 19 February 1921, and were joined by Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Master Sunder Singh, Jaswant Singh Jhabal and Dalip Singh. There they all decided to enforce the earlier decision of the Akali leadership not to send the jathas to Nanakana before the fixed date. Dalip Singh and Jaswant Singh were sent to Khara Sauda to meet Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabbar and to persuade him to postpone his plan of visiting Nanakana. After having informed Jathedar Jhabbar, Dalip Singh proceeded to Sunderkot to inform Bhai Lachhman Singh not to start for Nanakana as planned. On finding that Bhai Lachhman Singh and his jatha had already left the place, Dalip Singh proceeded to the factory of Bhai Uttam Singh which was located about a mile away from Nanakana.

Bhai Lachhman Singh had started for Nanakana late in the evening of 19 February 1921 with a few companions. On the morning of 20 February, the party reached a place half a mile away from Gurdwara Janamasthan. Here they met a messenger of Bhai Dalip Singh and received a message containing the SGPC's instructions not to proceed to Janamasthan. Bhai Lachhman Singh agreed, but other members of his jatha persuaded him that there would be no harm if they visited the gurdwara and, after paying their homage, returned peacefully. Having been thus persuaded by his companions, Bhai Lachhman Singh proceeded to Janamasthan and arrived there at the head of his jatha at about 6 on 20 February 1921. He and his jatha thus fell into the trap cleverly laid by Mahant Narain Das.

The Mahant seems to have acted according to a carefully worked out plan. This is borne out by the fact that a few days earlier he had shifted his family and valuables to Lahore. According to press reports, on hearing the news of the arrival of the jathas, the mahant distributed arms and ammunition to his men and exhorted them to action saying, 'Sikhs are coming, get ready'.⁴¹ As soon as the jatha entered the main gate of the gurdwara the Pathans posted outside shut the gate at a signal from the mahant. The members of the jatha, who were unaware of these

designs, sat down after bowing before the holy Granth and started singing hymns. According to the statement of H.A. Herbert, the Public Prosecutor in the Nanakana Case, 'Firing started almost as soon as the Akalis entered the Gurdwara. Not a single syllable was addressed to them; they were fired upon without parley or question. . . .'⁴² Immediately, 25 of the Mahant's men went atop the roof of the verandah and started firing at the Akalis sitting below. The rest of the mahant's men and sadhus began throwing bricks at the Sikhs, some of whom ran to take shelter in the side rooms. Others who ran to the side of the sanctuary were shot dead there. About 25 members of the Jatha who remained inside the gurdwara calmly suffered martyrdom. About 60 of the Akalis shut themselves in another sanctuary called Chaukhandi, but the mahant's men broke open the doors and killed them there. Then the side rooms were searched and 25 Akalis found there were put to death. According to contemporary accounts, Mahant Narain Das was himself supervising the whole show and urging his men 'to spare no long-haired Sikh in the whole vicinity.'⁴³

After wounding and killing 11 of the members of Bhai Lachhman Singh's party and other Jathas along with their sympathizers, the mahant and his men collected and burnt most of the dead and wounded pouring the kerosene, which he had already stored for the purpose, over them. According to an eye-witness account, 'In these burnt heaps there were traces of arms, heads, legs and other parts of bodies chopped off into small bits . . . and practically the whole compound was full of blood.'⁴⁴ The Public Prosecutor also confirms the fact that 'the Mahant tried to obliterate all traces of the killed by burning the corpses'.⁴⁵ Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India, in his report to the Secretary of State for India, also refers to the mahant's attempt to burn all the dead bodies.⁴⁶

The tragedy greatly perturbed the Sikhs in different parts of the country who vehemently condemned the action of the mahant and sent messages of sympathy for the Akali martyrs. Resolutions were passed everywhere demanding the death penalty for the mahant and his associates.⁴⁷ The Indian press was unanimous in its attack on the mahant. Even papers opposed to the Akali leadership condemned 'the cruel and savage deed of the Nanakana Mahant' and sympathized with the families of the Nanakana martyrs.⁴⁸ National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr Kitchlew, Lala Duni Chand and Lala Lajpat Rai, visited the scene of the tragedy and expressed their sympathy with the Akalis. Prominent Sikh leaders, Members of the Punjab Legislative Council, the Central Sikh League, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and other Sikh organizations reached the spot. In a big Shahidi Diwan held at Nanakana on 3 March 1921, Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabbar, who had played a prominent role in taking over the keys of the Janamasthan

from the deputy commissioner, narrated the incident in brief and pointed out that 'the happening had awakened the Sikhs from their slumber and the march towards *Swaraj* had been quickened'.⁴⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, who also attended the Shahidi Diwan made a brief speech in Hindustani in the course of which he said that 'the news of Nanakana was so staggering that he would not believe it without confirmation'.⁵⁰ Condemning the cruel deed of the mahant and commending the Akalis for their passive sufferings, he described the martyrdom of the Akali reformers as an 'act of national bravery'. He also denounced the foreign government whose rule, he said, 'was based on devilish tricks'. Later, in a message to the Sikhs in Lahore, the Mahatma said, 'Everything I saw and heard points to a second edition of Dyerism, more barbarous, more calculated and more fiendish than the Dyerism of Jallianwala.'⁵¹ The Mahatma also advised the Akalis to offer non-cooperation in the matter of the official enquiry into the Nanakana tragedy and consented to serve as chairman of a non-official Commission of Enquiry set up by the Central Sikh League, provided the Sikhs adopted a formal resolution affirming non-cooperation and agreed not to take recourse to the British law-courts for getting the murderers punished.⁵²

Official support to the mahants and their indirect involvement in the Nanakana tragedy convinced the Akali leadership that it was not possible for them to liberate their gurdwaras till they accepted Mahatma Gandhi's advice to liberate the bigger gurdwara, i.e., India, by throwing off the foreign yoke. After ensuring active co-operation and support from the nationalist press, the Indian National Congress and other nationalist forces in the country, the Akalis now formally joined the nationalist movement and launched a two-pronged struggle directed against the mahants, priests and other vested interests in the Sikh shrines on the one hand, and against their supporter, the British Government, on the other. Under the new programme of non-violent non-cooperation, the Akali struggle against a foreign government became one with the struggle for reform in Sikh shrines. Akali agitation over the Keys' Affair and later their struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh are two important manifestations of a popular movement in the province backed by the Indian National Congress and other nationalist forces in the country.

The Keys Affair

The Golden Temple, the Akal Takht and the adjoining gurdwaras had passed under the control of the Akalis in October 1920. Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia, the government-appointed manager of the Golden Temple, was holding the office of Secretary of the new Committee of Management appointed by the SGPC. Realizing the forces of public opinion, he decided to fall in line with the party of reform. Though the

SGPC, and the committee appointed by it, virtually controlled the affairs of the Golden Temple, the fact that the keys of the Toshakhana were still in possession of a government-appointed manager, gave the reformers the feeling of continued official control over the gurdwaras. At its meeting held on 29 October 1921, the Executive Committee of the SGPC asked Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia to hand over the keys to Sardar Kharak Singh, the President of the SGPC. Even before the resolution was made public, the news reached the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, who decided to forestall the manoeuvre by immediately sending Lala Amar Nath, an Extra Assistant Commissioner, accompanied by a police party to Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia to collect the keys of the Toshakhana. The latter handed over a bunch of 53 keys to him and obtained a formal receipt.

A period of intense agitational activity followed the surrender of the keys. The Punjab press, particularly the pro-Akali newspapers, reacted very sharply. While censuring the government for taking over the keys of the Golden Temple, the *Panth Sewak* wrote, 'What right has a foreign government to interfere in the affairs of the Gurdwaras?'⁵³ The *Akali* expressed its resentment thus: 'On the one hand the keys of the temple have been taken away and on the other the bureaucracy has crossed all limits in telling lies. . . .'⁵⁴ *Bande Mataram* came out with very interesting comments: 'It is like a person filing an application in the Court to direct the latter to get back the same. . . .'⁵⁵

Criticism in the press was followed by public condemnation of the official action in various parts of the Punjab. According to the report of a CID official:

Jathas from different parts of the Punjab reached Amritsar on the 11th of November. . . . A meeting was organised in the evening in the Bagh Akalian to protest against the action of the Deputy Commissioner. Sardar Kharak Singh and Jaswant Singh delivered violent speeches. The non-cooperators dominated the affairs and others were not allowed to speak.⁵⁶

In another meeting held at the Akal Takht the same day, the SGPC decided not to allow the newly-appointed sarbrah, Honorary Captain Bahadur Singh, to interfere in the affairs of the Golden Temple in any way.⁵⁷ At another protest meeting held at Lahore on 12 November 1921, the action of the Government was criticized and the Sikh members of the Legislative Council were asked to vacate their seats.⁵⁸ Protest meetings were also held at Gujranwala, Gujar Khan and other places. As a mark of protest, it was decided not to illuminate the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras on the occasion of the birthday of Guru Nanak on 15 November 1921. According to a CID note, orders were issued from Akal Takht

'asking the Sikh soldiers to give up service and some of them had agreed to abide by the instructions of the Akali leadership'.⁸²

Overwhelmed by the deluge of protest and indignation engulfing the central districts of the Punjab and facing the danger of its undermining the loyalty of Sikh troops in the Indian Army, the Government of India advised the authorities in Punjab that the only way to counter the movement of non-cooperation among the Sikhs was, 'to successfully prosecute five or six leading men, especially Dan Singh and Jaswant Singh'.⁸³ In compliance with these instructions, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar arrested these leaders of the non-cooperation movement while they were addressing a Sikh diwan at Ajnala on 26 November 1921 on the plea that 'they were discussing a 'political question' which had been prohibited under Seditious Meetings Act'. According to *The Akali*, 'the two leaders, Sardar Dan Singh and Sardar Jaswant Singh were arrested and handcuffed even before they could deliver any speeches'.⁵⁹

Arresting the Akali leaders and awarding them rigorous sentences and fines greatly added to the popularity of the movement. Reports of the CID officials that 'the agitation was spreading fast to the rural areas of the Sikh districts of the Punjab, particularly Lahore and Amritsar, combined with similar reports from troops, seem to have disturbed the authorities, who started devising a strategy to get out of the difficult situation by returning the keys. But in the face of determined opposition from the Sikhs, even the moderates dared not accept the official offer.' According to Mahatma Gandhi, the Government in the Punjab was in a real dilemma:

If it releases the Sikhs it would be ridiculed and the strength of the Sikhs will increase two-fold. If it does not release them their strength will increase ten-fold. It must, therefore, decide whether it should be wiser for it to allow the Sikhs' strength to increase ten times or to release the Sikh prisoners and be laughed at, taking consolation in the fact that the strength of Sikhs will then only be doubled.⁶⁰

Expediency forced the Government to follow first of the two options by unconditionally releasing the Akali prisoners and sending a gazetted officer to return keys to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the SGPC at a diwan especially arranged for the purpose.

Unconditional release of the Akali prisoners and the surrender of the keys to Baba Kharak Singh has been described by a contemporary European writer thus: 'Never was there a more shameful defeat. One thinks irresistibly of the capture of Calais by an English king when the leading citizens had to bring the keys to him clothed only in their shirts and with ropes round their necks. . . . The Punjab Government

had humbled itself to the dust before the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.⁶¹

The defeat of the Government was viewed by the nationalist leaders in the country, who had been backing the Akalis in their struggle against the bureaucracy, as a decisive victory for the forces of nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi sent the following telegram to Baba Kharak Singh:

FIRST BATTLE FOR INDIA'S FREEDOM WON.
CONGRATULATIONS.⁶²

The Akali Struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh

The Akali struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh is another landmark in the history of the Akali movement and the movement of non-violent non-cooperation in the country. It was here that the Akalis were able to demonstrate the efficacy of the weapon of peaceful satyagraha by their strict adherence to the vow of non-violence and thus set a new example to inspire the forces of nationalism in the country. Their firm faith shook the authorities whose immoral use of power was exposed by the patient sufferings of peaceful Akalis.

The Gurdwara reform movement acquired national dimensions, and a new meaning, when at Guru-ka-Bagh the repressive policies of the government met with firm resistance by people inspired by the ideal of non-violent satyagraha. The Guru-ka-Bagh struggle was made an 'issue' by the government of the Punjab whose dummy mahant became a mere tool in the hands of the British officials for the execution of the new policy of repression resorted to by the government to retrieve the prestige it had lost with the Akali victory in the agitation over the 'Keys Affair'.

When the Punjab Government found the Akalis isolated with the suspension of the larger movement of non-cooperation in February 1922 and the arrest of almost all important Congress leaders who were supporting the Akali cause, it thought of launching an offensive against the Akali leadership. A convenient excuse was found in what was otherwise an insignificant incident of felling of a dry *kikkar* tree by the Akalis on the land attached to the gurdwara. According to the official statement, the mahant complained to the police of the 'theft of his property' from his land. It is strange that a dry *kikkar* tree was described as 'property' to enable the mahant to lodge a complaint with the local police. Moreover, ever since the occupation of the gurdwara by the Akalis, wood from the land attached to it had been used for the community kitchen and the mahant had not previously raised any objection. Therefore, using this minor incident as an excuse, the authorities arrested five Akalis on 9 August 1922 and put them on trial. They were convicted of theft by Ivan Jenkins, a First-class Magistrate of Amritsar, and were sentenced to six

months' imprisonment and to a fine of Rs 50 each. According to the SGPC communiqué, and the version of the incident narrated by some contemporaries, such as Teja Singh, Ruchi Ram Sahni and Sohan Singh Josh, the Akalis were arrested not on the complaint of the mahant, but under orders from J.M. Dunnett, the District Magistrate of Amritsar. This was on the basis of the confidential diary of Bedi Brij Lal, a zaildar of village Mahilawala.⁶³ It was on the day after the arrests, when Beaty, the Additional Superintendent of Police, accompanied by other police officials, reached Guru-ka-Bagh that the complaint of Mahant Sunder Das was obtained in support of a step which had already been decided upon.

It seems that the official action against the Akalis, in anticipation of a formal complaint from the mahant, was in keeping with the instructions issued to commissioners and deputy commissioners in the Punjab by the home secretary. On the face of it, the incident was too insignificant to become an issue for a long-drawn struggle and a trial of strength between the powerful machinery of the Punjab Government, backed by the Government of India, and the peaceful Akalis, supported by the forces of country-wide nationalism and public opinion in India.

The action of the local authorities was seen by the Akali leadership as a fresh challenge. To protest against the official high-handedness and to assert their right to cut wood for the free community kitchen, jathas of five volunteers each started marching to Guru-ka-Bagh. A new wave of enthusiasm spread among the Akalis and jathas from the surrounding areas began to pour into Guru-ka-Bagh to help in the cutting and storing of wood for the gurdwara kitchen. The police remained inactive to begin with; they were perhaps awaiting fresh instructions to deal with this serious turn of events. Then on 22 August 1922, large-scale arrests of the Akalis commenced. As the wood-cutting continued, all those reaching Guru-ka-Bagh were arrested on charges of riot, theft and trespass. By 25 August 1922, the number of Akalis arrested there rose to 210. The Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, who had earlier gone to Simla to discuss the situation with the higher authorities, returned with new plans for tackling the situation. It seems that the local government had realized that arrests and the long sentences could not overawe the Akalis, whose number swelled to 4,000 by 28 August. Noticing that the arrests of such a large number of volunteers would create problems, a new method of dispersing the Akalis by force was adopted instead.

To check the continued influx of Akali jathas and their supporters and sympathizers, police pickets were placed on all the roads leading to Guru-ka-Bagh. Arrangements were also made to prevent the jathas from reaching Amritsar by rail or by road. By an order of J.M. Dunnett, District Magistrate of Amritsar, the Akali gatherings at Guru-ka-Bagh

were declared 'unlawful assemblies'. Also, consignors and carriers rushing supplies to them were warned that 'they were engaged in the commission of a cognizable offence under Section 143/109 of Indian Penal Code' and were prevented from doing so under Section 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The District Magistrate also directed the police picket commanders at Ranewala and Chhinawala bridges on the Lahore branch of the Upper Bari Doab 'to prevent the transmission of such supplies to the illegal assemblies at Guru-ka-Bagh'.⁶⁴ Following this directive, the police officials started seizing all the provisions and medical supplies being sent by the SGPC and other welfare associations to Guru-ka-Bagh for use by the wounded Akalis there.

In spite of these preventive measures, Akalis continued to pour into Amritsar, and Jathas consisting of 55, 60, 100 and sometimes even 200 Akalis marched to Guru-ka-Bagh daily after taking a vow of non-violence at the Akal Takht, Amritsar. According to contemporary Akali sources, these jathas were usually stopped by groups of police officials and beaten with lathis in order to disable them from proceeding towards the garden. Undeterred by the police beatings, the jathas continued to march towards Guru-ka-Bagh. On the evening of 29 August 1922, a jatha of 50 Akalis started from Akal Takht but was stopped at Ranewala bridge and on its refusal to disperse, its members were placed under nominal arrest and kept there. Another jatha of 50 arrived the next day, whereupon both jathas were allowed to cross the bridge under a heavy shower of lathi blows. As a result of the beatings, 30 injured members of the jatha had to be left behind, some of them in a serious condition. They were later taken to Amritsar for treatment. Another jatha of 60 Akalis which left the Akal Takht on 31 August was overtaken by the police during the night at the Chhina bridge 'where the members were attacked by Mr Beaty and his policemen with lathis and more than half of them were rendered unconscious'. The next day another Jatha of 120 members was surrounded by foot and mounted police near the Gumtala Bridge and dispersed by use of severe force.

The increasing use of force on the Akali jathas in the face of their totally non-violent approach had a great impact on the general public in the Punjab and outside. The SGPC appealed to men of independent opinion, journalists and national leaders 'to come and watch the non-violent spiritual struggle which was going on at Guru-ka-Bagh to obviate the possibility of misrepresentation at the hands of clever bureaucracy'. Several national leaders, Hindu and Muslim, members of the Legislative Council and press representatives converged on Guru-ka-Bagh. The reports of the pressmen when published in various newspapers in India and England aroused public opinion against the high-handed and brutal policy of the government. Prominent leaders and workers of the

Congress and the Khilafat movements reached Amritsar. On 10 September, the Akali Diwan at Amritsar was attended by Swami Shraddhanand, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Kifayat Ullah, Kumari Lajwanti and Sayed Atta Ullah Shah. All of them addressed the jathas and assured the Akali leadership of the support of the Hindus and Muslims.⁶⁵ In this diwan an American cinematographer, Captain A.L. Verges, was also present. He later filmed the beatings of the Akalis at the Guru-ka-Bagh and produced a short film entitled 'Exclusive Picture of India's Martyrdom'. He described the Akali morchas at Guru-ka-Bagh as 'a unique struggle in human history and a peaceful rebellion against the constituted authority'.

In another public meeting held at Jallianwala on 10 September under the presidentship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya which was attended by more than 13,000 persons, including nearly 1,000 women and 5,000 Akalis, the action of the police at Guru-ka-Bagh was severely criticized.⁶⁶ In the course of his speech, Pandit Malaviya declared that 'it is the duty of every Indian to express hatred and contempt for the actions of Government and raise a unanimous voice to demand a change of policy'. Resolutions were passed expressing hatred of, and contempt for the oppressive, inhuman and uncivilized treatment meted out to the Akalis, and demanding an immediate end to this policy. The protests of C.F. Andrews, a Christian Missionary, who described the official action as 'inhuman, brutal, foul, cowardly and incredible to an Englishman and a moral defeat of England', and who later, during his meeting with the Governor of Punjab, told him that he had seen with his own eyes hundreds of Christs being crucified at Guru-ka-Bagh, compelled the local authorities seriously to rethink.⁶⁷

Confidential reports regarding the ruthlessness of the police at Guru-ka-Bagh where respectable people of independent opinion, members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, and press representatives were also jostled, chased and given blows with sticks, made the authorities realize that, apart from the bad name which the government had earned in the press in and outside India, the action was likely to alienate the moderate elements in the Sikh community. All these factors forced the government to seek a way out of the impasse.

A retired government engineer, Rai Bahadur Sir Ganga Ram, found a way out of the tangle by taking the land of the Guru-ka-Bagh from the mahant on lease and then allowing the Akalis to cut wood. As soon as Sir Ganga Ram informed the deputy commissioner of his action, the police were withdrawn from Guru-ka-Bagh. The barbed wire around its enclosures was removed and the Akalis took possession of the land.

Thus, suddenly, and most undramatically, ended the long-drawn

struggle in which more than 1,500 Akalis were injured and over 5,000 suffered imprisonment.⁶⁸

Guru-ka-Bagh provides an interesting illustration of the strength of the regional manifestation of the nationalist struggle wherein the Akalis were again able to humble the bureaucracy by compelling it to accept the Sikhs' right to cut wood from the garden attached to the gurdwara, and by again obtaining the unconditional release of over 5,000 Akalis arrested in connection with this morcha.

In its anxiety to regain the loss of prestige suffered during the 'Keys Affair', the Government had opened a fresh front at Guru-ka-Bagh in the hope of delivering a severe blow to the Akali organization, only to receive another major setback.

4. Akali Struggle in the Sikh States

The Akali movement in the Sikh States — an outcome of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh's anxiety to win over the support of the radical section of the Sikh community, and the SGPC's response in taking up the question of his restoration, is another important phase in the Akali struggle against British imperialism. Apart from the fact that the rulers of two important Sikh States — Bhupinder Singh of Patiala and Ripudaman Singh of Nabha — were closely involved, one way or the other, with the movement right from its inception till the finale, it was in the Sikh States that the Akali leadership, after its initial victories in the 'Keys Affair' and at Guru-ka-Bagh, offered a fresh challenge to the authorities on an issue of dubious relevance. It was during their agitation in the Sikh States that the Akalis met with the strongest opposition from the British officials who decided to put an effective stop to their activities by declaring the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the various jathas affiliated to them, 'unlawful associations'.⁶⁹ It was here again that the Sikh princes, Sikh troops, Sikh Sudhar and Zail Committees and other pro-British interests in the Sikh community rallied round the government in weakening a popular movement.⁷⁰

As a detailed history of the Akali Movement in the Sikh States is not within the scope of the present work, this study will limit itself to a discussion of the Akali agitation over the restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha and the resultant struggle at Jaito.

The abdication of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha and the Akali involvement in the affair is one of the most controversial issues of the Akali Movement. The Maharaja, who ascended the throne on 20 December 1911, was made to abdicate in favour of his minor son, Partap Singh, on 9 July 1923.

As the news of the abdication of the Maharaja and his removal to Dehra Dun was made public, the nationalist press, the SGPC, the Akali and the nationalist leadership reacted sharply. Pro-Akali newspapers, which were already carrying on propaganda in favour of Ripudaman Singh, exhibited a two-fold reaction: (i) stormy protest against the government's interference in Nabha, and (ii) further glorification of the Maharaja. These papers challenged the official version that the Maharaja had abdicated on his own and declared that the statements issued by the government were false and deceptive. *The Akali* on 13 August 1923 wrote: 'The charges levelled against him are serious and it is necessary to rebut them, for silence will be taken to mean that they are well-founded.'⁷¹ *The Nation* wrote that 'it possessed certain information of a most serious nature and the facts before it revealed that the statements made by the responsible authorities themselves that the abdication of the Maharaja of Nabha was obtained as a result of a farcical display of charge-sheets which were meant to hoodwink the credulous'.⁷² British officials were charged with having insulted the Maharaja, the senior Maharani Sahiba and her daughter, and having forcibly taken possession of valuables in the palace. The feelings of the Sikhs were stirred by quoting the Political Agent as having taunted the Maharaja with the query: 'Where is that Akali?' The official action in Nabha was described as a challenge to the Akali Movement.⁷³

With the Akali leadership's decision to take up the question of Ripudaman Singh's restoration to the throne of Nabha, the issue of his abdication assumed wider ramifications and the arena of controversy extended. In the beginning, opinions differed among the members of the SGPC with regard to their stand on the issue.

Eventually, the propaganda of the Indian press, particularly pro-Nabha such as *Akali*, *Akali-te-Pardesi* and some newspapers started or financed by Maharaja Ripudaman Singh such as *Sachha Dhandora*, *Daler-i-Hind*, *Bir Akali* and *Kirpan Bahadur*, made a strong impact on the Sikhs. These papers argued that the Maharaja was deposed not because of maladministration in his state or his dispute with the Maharaja of Patiala, but because of his sympathy for and support to the Akali Movement. 'The Official action,' these papers stated, 'was a side-attack on the Akali movement.' In the meantime, a militant group of the Akalis in the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Sikh League joined hands in exerting pressure on the SGPC to take speedy pro-Maharaja action. The Shiromani Akali Dal passed formal resolutions urging the SGPC to raise a 'typhoon of agitation till the Maharaja was restored' and assured the leadership of the SGPC of its wholehearted support in the struggle.⁷⁴

A strong public opinion having been thus created, Master Tara Singh, an extremist Akali leader, did the spade-work for the Akali struggle for

the restoration of the Maharaja of Nabha. Through a series of forceful articles in the two Akali dailies, *The Akali* and the *Akali-te-Pardesi*, he made an effort to arouse Sikh sentiments by reviving the memory of the removal of Maharaja Duleep Singh from the Punjab, thus drawing a parallel between the two events. For example, in one of the issues of the *Akali-te-Pardesi* he wrote:

Lovers of the Panth, will you allow the guardians of Maharaja Duleep Singh to take charge of the Tikka Sahib of Nabha? Rise, hold Diwans and deliver lectures. Every Sikh society should raise a storm of agitation against this treachery and deceit . . . do not stop, be fearless and come forward. . . .⁷⁵

The Akali leadership formally took up the question by issuing a communiqué on 9 July 1923 stating: 'The hereditary ruler of Nabha was unjustly and forcibly detached from the administration of his state by the Government of India. The communiqué further charged the government with 'arbitrary conduct and high-handedness towards the Maharaja'. 29 July was fixed as a 'day of prayer' for the restoration of the Maharaja and 9 September 'the day for barefooted protest march' in the principal streets of Delhi and important towns of the Punjab. The gatherings on such occasions were urged 'to pass resolution condemning the action of the Government and the political agent and send messages of sympathy telegraphically to whatever place the Maharaja might have been removed'. In another communiqué issued on 10 July 1923, it was stated that the SGPC had 'very good reasons to believe that the abdication of the Maharaja was not voluntary but had been exhorted by official pressure; that the weakening of Nabha was the thin end of the wedge against an important section of the Sikh community. . . .⁷⁶ On 2 August 1923, the SGPC sent the following telegram to the viceroy:

Shromani Committee is in possession of unimpeachable documentary evidence to prove that intimidation and threats were used by Government officials to compel him to sign a pronouncement that his relinquishment was voluntary. Shromani Committee on behalf of Sikh community asks Indian Government to submit to independent enquiry to satisfy Sikhs, failing that Sikh community will have right to believe that Indian Government admits above contention.⁷⁷

Failing to get any assurance from the government either of the restoration of the Maharaja in the near future or the appointment of an independent enquiry committee, the Akali leadership thought of getting the grievance redressed through non-violent agitation. At a meeting of the general body of the SGPC, held on 4 August 1923, the committee decided that the Nabha question was one with which it was entitled to

deal. On the following day, i.e. 5 August, the committee unanimously passed resolutions criticizing the action of the government and describing it as 'a side attack' on the Akali movement; condemning the treacherous officials of the Maharaja; and authorizing its executive committee to get the wrong done to Nabha and the Panth righted by all peaceful and legitimate means.

The officials in the province and the higher authorities at Delhi, who were watching the developments with great concern prepared themselves to meet the impending challenge from the Akalis. Even before the SGPC could formally pass this resolution, the viceroy had called a meeting of the rulers of the Sikh States, the Political Agent for the Phoolkian States, the British Administrator of Nabha and other important officials of the Government of India and of the Punjab, to discuss joint measures and to co-ordinate the efforts of the Government of the Punjab and the rulers of the Sikh States in case of Akali agitation on the Nabha question. It was decided that 'the Akali Jathas should not be checked from leaving the British territories', as it was thought that handling the Akali jathas in the Sikh States would be easier. Apart from the use of Sikh troops to be supplied by the Sikh rulers, there was another advantage. Official action against the jathas in the native States could also escape the attention of a large number of press reporters and other observers. The conference assured the Administrator of Nabha that 'the Government would support him fully and sympathetically in any reasonable action he would pursue'. It was also decided that 'firing would be considered legitimate in case of active resistance'.

On his return to Nabha, the Administrator started making preparations to meet the impending challenge. He armed himself by issuing an ordinance prohibiting meetings within the State territory to discuss the Nabha issue. The ordinances failed to discourage the Akalis in Nabha State who had described official action against the Maharaja as 'a blow to the Panthic orthodoxy, organisation and well-being'. In defiance of these orders, they continued to hold diwans in different parts of the state to discuss and condemn the official action. One such diwan was organized at Jaito on 25 August 1923. A huge procession was taken out on the first day of the diwan. On the third day, 27 August, certain resolutions were passed which, apart from expressing sympathy with the Maharaja, condemned the action of the state police, the traitorous state officials and the arrest of the Akalis in the neighbouring state of Patiala. Under the orders of Gurdial Singh, the Assistant Administrator, the state police arrested the organizers, Inder Singh and other Akalis, on charges of delivering 'political speeches'. The incident offered the Akalis a challenge and the diwan, which was originally scheduled for three days and was to disperse on 27 August, was extended indefinitely.

So far the Akali Diwan at Jaito had been a local affair, as no Akali had yet come from outside, but the action of the Nabha administration drew the attention of the Akali leaders from outside the state. To continue the diwan and perhaps to attract visitors from outside, the organizers started an Akhand Path at Jaito. The Nabha police, in their bid to arrest the Akalis, including the one reading the holy Granth, were accused of having disrupted the Akhand Path. The incident caused a great commotion among the Sikhs and led to the famous Jaito *morcha*.

Jaito Morcha

Jaito, a small town in Nabha State, thus became the scene of a vigorous Akali struggle. The SGPC with a view to vindicating its right to free worship and to getting the Maharaja restored, decided to send daily jathas to Jaito from the Akal Takht at Amritsar. To begin with, jathas of 25 members each daily walked to Jaito after taking a pledge of non-violence, in thought, word and deed, before the Akal Takht, with the following aims:

- (a) to resume the interrupted Akhand Path at Gangsar, Jaito, and
- (b) to suffer, in meek and humble spirit, all hardships and tortures inflicted by the proud officials, for the sake of establishing the Sikh birthright for free congregation and worship in Sikh Gurdwaras.⁷⁸

The British officials in the province, who were watching with great concern the growing power and prestige of the Akali leadership, noticed that this was adding to the success of the SGPC's appeal in impressing upon the non-Akali Sikhs that this was a purely religious programme. The officials were particularly worried that the journey of the Akali jathas to Jaito would be of the nature of a triumphal procession, which would add further to the Akali prestige. Higher officials suggested that timely action would not only check the Akali activities but would also restore the prestige of the bureaucracy. To those British officials in the province, who were waiting for 'sufficient evidence' to implement the Secretary of State's advice 'to put an effective stop to the Akali operations by the arrest and prosecution of all the organisers [of the Akali movement] as abettors', the Akali jathas' march to Nabha provided a good opportunity to declare the Shiromani Akali Dal, the SCPC and other allied organizations as 'unlawful associations'.⁷⁹

The Akali Dal's decision to send jathas to Jaito was described as 'openly encouraging bodies of Akalis to invade the Nabha State with the object of intimidating the Government and to interfere with the maintenance of law and order.' By an order dated 12 October 1923, the Government of the Punjab declared the SGPC, and all jathas organized by or affiliated to it, an 'unlawful associations' as they 'constituted a danger to

public peace'.⁸⁰ Consequently, all the 60 members of the Interim Committee of the SGPC were arrested and charged with 'treason against the King-Emperor'. The order and the subsequent official action failed to achieve the desired object. They could not 'put an effective stop to the Akali activity'. Jathas continued to pour into Jaito from all parts of the Punjab. As planned earlier, at the official meeting held in Delhi on 25 July, these jathas were not checked in British territory. However, as soon as they reached the boundaries of the Nabha State, they were arrested and beaten mercilessly. But the members of the Jathas, as Jawaharlal Nehru testified, gave an 'amazing exhibition of courage and endurance . . . and never retreated a step, nor did they raise their hands against the police'.⁸¹ After being kept in custody for a few days, they were sent to the neighbouring areas of Babalkanti in Rajasthan or to Rewari, some 500 kilometres away from Nabha. Here they were left 'in penniless condition to shift for themselves as best as they could'. Within a period of seven months this happened with no less than 5,000 Akali pilgrims.

However, the march of the smaller jathas of 25 members to Jaito and their arrest by the Nabha State authorities did not yield any tangible results. In order to intensify the agitation, the SGPC decided that a bigger Shahidi Jatha of 500 Akalis should reach Jaito on 21 February 1924 to coincide with the third anniversary of the Nanakana tragedy.

After making preliminary arrangements, the SGPC decided to despatch the jatha on 9 February 1924. Before its departure, the jatha was exhorted by the Jathedar of the Akal Takht to remain perfectly non-violent in thought, word and deed. According to the report of the Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar, 'the members of the Jatha were not regular hangers-on of the Durbar Sahib but included genuine fanatics'.⁸² Later, Dr Saifud-Din Kitchlew, Pandit Dina Nath and some other members of the Congress Party also joined the Jatha. According to official reports, about 30,000 people witnessed the jatha set out from the Clock Tower at Amritsar.⁸³

On its march, the members of the Jatha were welcomed by the villages they passed through. When the Jatha entered the Malwa territory, in the Sikh state of Patiala, the locals undaunted by the *Shahi Farmans* of their ruler, Bhupinder Singh, welcomed members of the jatha. In an address presented to the jatha, the Malwa Sikhs assured the Akali leadership that 'if this place [Jaito] is made the second Nanakana Sahib we take the vow that, in obedience to the orders of the Guru Panth and subject to non-violence, each and every one of us will shed his blood at the place where your sweat falls, we are at all times ready to serve you.'⁸⁴

After marching through different villages and evoking spirited response from the Sikh peasantry of Malwa, on 20 February the Jatha

enthusiastically reached Bargari, a village on the border of Nabha and Faridkot, about fifteen kilometres from Jaito. The Jatha left for its destination, the gurdwara of Gansar at Jaito — on 21 February, about midday.

When the Jatha reached a distance of about 150 metres from the Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib, Wilson-Johnston, the Administrator of Nabha, arrived and ordered it to stop. But the Jatha, which had taken a vow before the Akal Takht to resume the interrupted Akhand Path, come what may, and was determined not to return without achieving their goal, continued to march in the direction of Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib. Wilson Johnston, gave the signal to open fire.

According to Zimand:

It was at 2.25 p.m. that the firing started. The firing was in regular volleys and there were no desultory shots. The first round of firing lasted for full two minutes, i.e. from 2.45 to 2.47 p.m. The second round of firing started at 2.55 and it lasted for full three minutes.⁸⁵

The members of the jatha, who from the very beginning knew the risk involved in their march to Jaito and were prepared to attain martyrdom, were not deterred by the volleys of bullets and continued their onward march. Many of them fell dead or wounded; but carrying them the rest of the Jatha moved directly to Tibbi Sahib.

The native press reacted by applauding the Jatha for their sacrifices and by severely condemning the administrator and the Government of India for their ruthless barbarity and for enacting another Jallianwala Bagh spectacle. *Onward* wrote: 'General Dyer is reborn and re-incarnated in the person of Administrator of Nabha.'⁸⁶ *The Loyal Gazette* drew a comparison between the incident at Jaito and the earlier tragedy at Nanakana and wrote that, while the latter was the work of a 'Selfish and tyrannical Mahant', the former was that of a 'civilized Government headed by a European Officer, with high professions about justice and law and order'.⁸⁷ The *Akali te-Pardesi* and other pro-Akali papers held the government of India responsible for the incident and demanded the appointment of a committee to enquire into the facts.

Important leaders of the Indian National Congress, who were watching with keen interest the Akali involvement in the Nabha affair and had, in fact, formally expressed sympathy with the Maharaja and the Akalis, condemned the official action. Public meetings were held at Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Karachi which were addressed by such popular national leaders as Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mohamed Ali, Shaukat Ali, C.R. Das, Pandit Malaviya and others. Mahatma Gandhi and Lala Lajpat Rai also expressed their sympathy with the Akali cause.⁸⁸

In a resolution passed on 31 December 1923, the Congress described the official action against the Akali leadership as 'a direct challenge to the right of free association of all Indians' and appealed to the nation to stand by the Sikhs. The Khilafat Committee and the Muslim League also expressed their sympathies with the Akalis. National Members in the Central Assembly and the Punjab Legislative Council also condemned the Jaito firing.

While the demand for an independent enquiry into the Jaito firing was gaining strength, the Akali leadership continued sending more jathas to Jaito, even though some national leaders advised them to suspend their movement in order to take fresh stock of the situation and also to give time to the government to think over the problem. It is interesting here to note that Mahatma Gandhi, who was mainly responsible for the Akalis shifting from purely religious agitation to passive resistance against the government and was a source of inspiration to the Akalis, also advised them to suspend their movement and to stop sending more jathas to Jaito. In his letter dated 4 March 1924 to the secretary of the SGPC, the Mahatma advised the Akalis to think over the whole question afresh. Further, he informed them that he would be able to help them only if the Akalis could separate their agitation in Nabha, which in his opinion was a purely political question, from their movement of religious reform. Here the Mahatma seems to have neglected the fact that it was he and his lieutenants in the Sikh League who brought the Akalis from religion to politics and persuaded them to formally join the movement of non-cooperation by launching a frontal attack against the bureaucracy, which was backing the vested interests in the Sikh shrines. During his visit to Nanakana soon after the tragedy he not only expressed sympathy with the Akalis but also advised them to offer non-cooperation to the government in the matter of the official enquiry into the tragedy and agreed to serve as the president of the non-official enquiry committee in case the Akalis agreed to adopt a formal resolution of non-cooperation. In a long speech (in Hindustani) he called upon the Akalis to broaden the scope of their movement for the liberation of the Sikh shrines by joining the larger movement for the liberation of the country. Later, when the Akalis delivered a moral defeat to the powerful bureaucracy in the Punjab over the 'Keys Affair', the Mahatma sent a congratulatory telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the SGPC and hailed the Akali victory as 'the first victory of the forces of nationalism in the country'. At that stage, when the Akalis were engaged in a life and death struggle at Jaito, the Mahatma's advice to immediately suspend the movement and to drop the Nabha issue altogether was bound to further weaken the Akali Movement. When the Akali leaders expressed their inability to accept his advice and continued sending more jathas

to Nabha, the Mahatma started issuing open letters expressing his doubts about the Akalis adherence to the principle of non-violence. The Mahatma's reference to the alleged demolition of Hindu temples by the Sikh reformers and to the past incidents of the removal of Hindu idols from the precincts of the Golden Temple were bound to weaken the communal harmony brought about by the Akali Movement by enlisting the sympathy and support of the Hindu and Sikh masses to the Akali cause. In his letters to the Akalis the Mahatma asked them to give him an assurance that their movement was 'neither anti-Hindu nor anti any other race or creed'. The Mahatma seems to have also been influenced by the official propaganda that the Akalis were working for the 'restoration of the Sikh Raj under the cloak of religious reform' when he asked them to declare that 'the SGPC has no desire for the establishment of the Sikh Raj'. In spite of the Akalis giving a clear demonstration of their strict adherence to the principle of passive suffering at Nanakana, Guru-ka-Bagh, Jaito and other places, and a number of independent observers, including the Congress leaders, testifying to this; and of the SGPC formally condemning violent activities, confirming their belief in non-violence and categorically stating that 'their movement, was neither anti-Hindu nor anti any other creed' with no desire of establishing Sikh Raj, the Mahatma showed himself unable to form a correct assessment of the Akalis and their movement and suddenly withdrew his support to their cause at a very critical juncture. Whether this shift in the Mahatma's stand was due to his fears about the Akalis becoming violent and Jaito repeating the history of Chauri Chaura or was in keeping with his policy of suspending movements when they grew too strong and went beyond the control of his trusted lieutenants, is a question which needs further investigation.⁸⁹

After the sudden withdrawal of moral support by Mahatma Gandhi, a number of other factors added further to the difficulties of the Akali leadership. Opening of fresh front at Bhai Pheru, in Lahore District, while the Jaito morcha was still on, put additional strain on the Akali resources. Malcolm Hailey, the new governor of Punjab, tried to weaken the movement by his policy of isolating the Akalis from the nationalist leadership and by creating divisions in their ranks. In order to divert the energies and resources of the Akalis and thereby weaken their movement, he urged the judicial machinery in the state to appoint a Receiver for Nanakana Sahib and to terminate the lease of land at Guru-ka-Bagh given to Sir Ganga Ram. At the same time, he encouraged the officially sponsored anti-Akali associations to produce drafts of a Gurdwara Bill and to take the initiative in the matter of the Akhand Path at Jaito and to thus take the wind out of the Akali sails.⁹⁰

The Government of the Punjab was also growing tired of the increas-

ing number of Akali prisoners resulting from the Akali leadership's decision not to suspend jathas marching to Jaito. Apart from the practical difficulties of accommodating the increasing number of Akali prisoners, there were equally important political considerations which compelled the Punjab Government to find a solution to the Jaito problem. Official action at Jaito and the arrest and detention of a large number of British subjects in the Nabha State without proper trials provided the nationalist members of the Indian Legislative Assembly and other critics of the government with a chance to lambast the official policy. The Punjab Government's failure to find a solution to the Akali problem and to get an agreed Bill passed for the purpose, strengthened the efforts of M.A. Jinnah and Madan Mohan Malaviya to introduce a Gurdwara Bill in the Central Legislative Assembly.

The efforts of Pandit Malaviya to get a bill introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly compelled the Punjab Governor and other officials to come to terms with the Akalis. It was under these circumstances that Sardar Tara Singh, an independent MLC from Moga, was encouraged by the government to introduce a bill⁹¹ in the Punjab Legislative Council on 7 May 1925 which was passed by the Council on 7 July 1925. Passage of the bill not only helped in the settlement of the issue of the interruption of the Akhand Path, with Bhai Jodh Singh and other leaders performing Akhand Path, to atone for the one interrupted at Jaito, but also put an end to the five-year old agitation with the release of Akali prisoners arrested in connection with the movement.

5. The Akali Movement and Nationalist Politics in Punjab

The religio-political struggle of the Akalis directed against the priests, mahants and other vested interests in the Sikh shrines, and consequently against the British imperialism, was one of the most powerful popular movements in modern India. Of all the movements in the Punjab, the Akalis' was, perhaps, the most popular, the biggest and the strongest, with a broad base and active mass participation. In the short span of five years more than 30,000 men and women were jailed, 400 died for the cause, and 2,000 were wounded, and a large number suffered dismissal from service, withdrawal of jagirs and pensions, imposition of fines, forfeiture of property and various other forms of punishment. The recruitment of Sikhs into the army and other services under the British Government was suspended for some time. A large number of Sikh soldiers were court-martialled for wearing *kirpans* and black turbans — thus expressing their sympathy with the Akali Movement. The editors, printers and publishers of Akali and pro-Akali papers were fined or imprisoned, their securities forfeited and their publications banned. Villages which had shown a marked sympathy for the movement were

especially punished and recruitment of their inhabitants to the army and other services stopped.⁹²

In return for the large-scale sufferings and sacrifices, the Akali Movement secured to the Sikhs, in the form of the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Act, an undisputed and exclusive control over the historic Sikh shrines. The movement also secured to the Sikhs a system of gurdwara elections conducted under the supervision of the government to form managing bodies for their places of religious importance. The system of gurdwara elections was, and continues to be, a unique feature, because no other social or religious group anywhere in the world seems to exercise a similar privilege of directly electing the managing bodies of their religious places.

The Akali Movement, though itself a product of the general awakening and growing political consciousness in the country, seems to have greatly strengthened the forces of nationalism in the Punjab by rejecting the mahants, the landed aristocracy and other pro-British and vested interests in the Sikh community who had been declared the 'natural leaders' of the Sikhs by the official machinery. The movement provided the Sikh community with a new type of middle-class nationalist leadership, consisting of barristers, vakils, school and college teachers and retired military officers. This new leadership, instead of playing into the hands of the British officials as the previous leadership of the Chief Khalsa Diwan had done, preferred to join the mainstream of nationalism in the country. It was not surprising, therefore, to find a majority of the Akali leaders turning from the original Akali programme of Gurdwara reform and linking it with the movement of non-cooperation launched by Mahatma Gandhi and the larger programme of the country's struggle for freedom. It was mainly due to the emergence of this new type of leadership that the Akalis could secure the active sympathy and support of the Indian National Congress and other nationalist forces in the country in their own struggle against British imperialism in the Punjab.

It was mainly due to the Akali-Congress association during the Akali Movement that the two leaderships came closer to each other and that the Sikhs became inextricably involved in Congress activities. Actually the two groups among the Sikhs — (i) the Akali advocates of purely religious reform, and (ii) others who looked upon the Gurdwara reform only as a part of the larger programme of the country's freedom — remained united till 1939, initially under the leadership of Baba Kharak Singh and later that of Master Tara Singh.

In the Akali Movement, the Congress found an opportunity to further its own programme of non-cooperation launched by Mahatma Gandhi and to strengthen its position in Punjab. By winning over the Akali leadership they were able to influence a large section of the Sikh masses

who had till then remained aloof from the Congress programme. As Maulana Mohamed Ali remarked in the course of his presidential address at the Cocanada Session of the Indian National Congress on 31 December 1923: 'A better opportunity for civil disobedience at least on a provincial scale never presented itself since the arrest of the Mahatma.'⁹³

To give moral support to the Akalis in their non-violent struggle against the government, the Congress leadership passed formal resolutions supporting them in whatever they did. An attack on the SGPC and the Shiromani Akali Dal was described by the Congress as a direct challenge to the right of free association of all Indians and a blow aimed at all movements for freedom. Kitchlew, the convener of the Satyagraha Committee, emphasized that 'the Akali struggle was now a national struggle and defeat of the Akalis for want of help from the Congress would affect the national assembly'. The Akalis were also eulogized as 'the only living wind of the national movement' and 'the strongest community in India because of the Triumph of Satyagraha of which they had given full proof'.⁹⁴

Apart from passing formal resolutions lending them moral support, the Congress leadership also rendered the Akalis solid practical help by sending Congress volunteers to assist them in their publicity work. An Akali-Sahayik Bureau was set up at Amritsar to co-ordinate the Akali-Congress activities and to help the Akalis organize their propaganda machinery. Almost all important national leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Mohamed Ali and Hakim Ajmal Khan personally visited Nankana, Amritsar, Guru-ka-Bagh and other places of Akali activity to obtain first-hand information about the events and to help the Akalis by giving advice and moral support. In the special session of the Congress held at Delhi in September 1923, a resolution was passed, supporting the Akali agitation in the Sikh State of Nabha and it was also decided to send Congress observers to get first-hand information about developments there. Jawaharlal Nehru, A.T. Gidwani and K. Santhanam, who were sent there for the purpose, were arrested as soon as they entered the state territory and put behind the bars for having entered the State without prior permission of the British Administrator of Nabha. During their stay in Nabha Jail and their subsequent trials, the Congress observers not only gained first-hand knowledge about the Akali cause and the genuineness of their sufferings but also got a chance to observe the high-handedness of the bureaucracy and the arbitrary nature of justice in the Sikh State of Nabha, then put under the control of a British Administrator. In a long hand-written statement, choked with emotion and highly appreciative of the Akalis, Nehru attacked the British Administrator of Nabha and the judicial machinery in the State for their

'unscrupulous and crooked ways'. Having gained first-hand impressions about the Akalis, Nehru became their great admirer and wished to prove 'worthy of their high tradition and fine courage'. The last paragraph of his original statement drafted in the Nabha Jail on 23 November 1923, reads:

I was in jail when the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle was gallantly fought and won by the Sikhs. I marvelled at the courage and sacrifice of the Akalis and wished that I could be given an opportunity of showing my deep admiration of them by some form of service. That opportunity has now been given to me and I earnestly hope that I shall prove worthy of their high tradition and fine courage *Sat Sri Akal*.⁹⁵

In return for the help extended to the Akali Movement, the Congress leadership was able to establish a good deal of influence with the Akali leaders and through them the Congress programme was carried to the Sikh masses. It was mainly due to the nationalist influence upon the Akali leadership that the SGPC was able to adopt non-violent non-cooperation as a weapon with which to fight the powerful bureaucracy in Punjab and to broaden the scope of their earlier programme of gurdwara reform. A formal resolution in favour of non-cooperation and passive resistance was passed by the SGPC on 11 May 1921. Resolutions were also passed at this meeting to boycott liquor and foreign goods and to substitute panchayats for courts of law.

With the election of Sardar Kharak Singh, a professed non-cooperator and a die-hard nationalist, as president of the newly elected SGPC in July 1921, and the formation of a new executive committee consisting of extremists and non-cooperators, the movement of non-cooperation in the Punjab was further strengthened. This new element in the Akali leadership, to whom the cause of religious reform differed little from extreme nationalism, was able to introduce national politics into the movement for gurdwara reform and thereby broaden the scope of the Akali movement.

Perusal of the court proceedings against some of the prominent Akali leaders shows that the ideology of non-cooperation had taken deep root among them. Most of them did not defend themselves in the courts. During interrogation they neither admitted nor denied the official charges against them. Whatever they said in the court was not by way of defence but to tell the official machinery that as non-cooperators they had no regard for the British judicial system which they considered arbitrary and biased. The following extract from Baba Kharak Singh's speech in the court serves as an example: 'As the Government is a party to this prosecution and the Judge is one of its servants, I, therefore do not wish to make any statement. My position as President of the Sikh

Panth is like that of the President of the United States, France and Germany.⁹⁶

A strong link and reciprocal relationship had thus been established between the two movements. The Akali Movement became a part of the national movement — in effect a manifestation of the Congress programme of non-cooperation at the provincial level — and in return received active sympathy and support from the Congress leadership in its struggle against the government. Growing Akali-Congress liaison is evident from the fact that while in 1919 there was not a single Sikh on the AICC, in 1920 there were two and in 1922 nine Sikhs on the AICC.⁹⁷

The Akali Movement also clearly demonstrated the efficacy of the doctrine of non-violent non-cooperation when the Akalis in the Punjab were able by peaceful means to dislodge the mahants from their hereditary positions in the Sikh shrines, and the government from its unreasonable stand. The *Akali-te-Pardesi* summarized in the following manner the Akali contribution towards the strengthening of the forces of nationalism:

The Akalis have shown to the Indians how a most arrogant, oppressive, cunning and deceitful bureaucracy can be brought to its knees by means of non-violent Satyagraha. By sacrifices at Guru-ka-Bagh, they have destroyed the prestige of the bureaucracy and raised the dignity of India.⁹⁸

6. Sikh Nationalist Politics 1925-37

Akali-Congress comradeship forged during the Akali struggle (1920-25) greatly influenced Sikh nationalist politics in the years that followed. A perusal of the latter period shows that in spite of difference of opinion on certain issues, like the Nehru Report and Sikh recruitment to the army during the Second World War, by and large, a majority of the Sikh leadership went with the Congress on various crucial matters concerning the future of India.

Growing nationalist influence on Sikh politics is evident from the fact that the Central Sikh League,⁹⁹ which was formed to fight for political rights of the Sikh with Congress help and guidance, time and again opposed communal representation in Punjab as well as in the rest of the country. As early as 1923 the Central Sikh League had passed a resolution condemning British attempts to divide various communities in India by introducing a system of representation on communal lines. The resolution called upon the Sikhs and other minorities to give up communal representation in the best interests of the country.¹⁰⁰ Nationalist Sikhs like Baba Gurdit Singh and Sardul Singh Caveeshar were convinced that communal representation had harmed the Sikhs more than it safeguarded their interests. According to Caveeshar, communal representation was at the bottom of all communal riots and was devised by

the British authorities to perpetuate their rule by dividing people in India on communal lines.¹⁰¹ These leaders reiterated their stand again in 1926 and argued that the Sikh League was brought into existence not to beg for concessions like the pro-British vested interests among the Sikhs. They were for the Sikhs getting their rights by making sacrifices for swaraj in close co-operation with the Congress. The Congress reciprocated the Central Sikh League's gesture by promising the same treatment to the Sikhs in Punjab as was to be offered to the Muslim minorities in other provinces. At its Bombay session 15-18 May 1927 the AICC passed the following resolution in this connection: 'Provided that reciprocal concessions in favour of minorities including the Sikhs in the Punjab may be made by mutual agreement so as to give them representation in excess of the proportion of the number of seats to which they would be entitled on the population basis in any province or provinces . . .'¹⁰²

When the Simon Commission visited India, an all-parties Sikh Conference was convened at Amritsar on 30 January 1928 to clarify the Sikh attitude towards the Commission. The Conference, attended among others by such prominent leaders as Baba Kharak Singh and Sardar Mangal Singh, decided that the Sikhs should boycott the Commission as advised by the Indian National Congress, and appealed to the Sikh community to join the hartal on 3 February 1928 when the Commission was to land in Bombay.¹⁰³ Again when the Indian National Congress decided to call an All Parties Conference at Delhi to draft a swarajya constitution, the Central Sikh League decided to join the conference and help the nationalist leadership find an agreed solution to the problem of communal representation. Knowing fully well that abolition of communal representation was not in their immediate interest, the Sikh representatives gave a proof of their nationalist feeling by declaring that their community was 'prepared to accept representation on non-communal basis and this proves that they are particularly prepared to make sacrifices for national welfare and advancement'.¹⁰⁴ Mangal Singh, the Sikh representative on the Nehru Committee signed the Nehru Report knowing fully well that the final recommendations of the Committee were not acceptable to the majority of his Sikh compatriots. In his support to the Nehru Report, Mangal Singh was joined by other Sikh nationalists like Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Amar Singh Jhabal, Baba Gurdit Singh, Giani Hira Singh Dard, Sarmukh Singh Jhabbal, Giani Kartar Singh and others of their way of thinking. Though Master Tara Singh did not agree with Mangal Singh's stand on the Nehru Report he did not favour a boycott of the Congress as was being advocated by a section of the Sikh leadership, interestingly, led by Baba Kharak Singh. In the course of his presidential address at the annual session of the Central

Sikh League held in October 1929 at Lyallpur, Master Tara Singh said, 'We cannot boycott the Congress permanently, we are born to fight for freedom and we cannot stand aloof from an organisation whose sole object is such a fight.'¹⁰⁵ Exhorting the Sikhs to be firm in the fight for freedom, he said:

I would not mind if you, instead of standing with the Congress, boycott it and stand in front of it in the fight for freedom. But if you boycott the Congress and stand in the back lines, it will be a matter of shame for our community. Those who are for boycotting the Congress must devise some positive fighting programme, and I am sure all the people will be with them. But if you simply pass a resolution to boycott the Congress and oppose whatever the Congress does, you will be caught in the trap of bureaucracy. Some, tired of our inactivity, may rejoin the Congress; the rest may die their natural death. I beseech you to be very cautious when considering this question. On the other hand, if we go on working with the Congress as before, our attitude may be misunderstood and we may not be considered earnest in our demands. This is also dangerous, and we have to chalk out a *via media*. It is not difficult to chart a safe course if you gentlemen consider unity to be the chief need of the time.¹⁰⁶

Baba Kharak Singh, who did not agree with the Nehru Report for having accepted dominion status instead of *purna swaraj*, was persuaded by his lieutenants to sink his differences and support the Congress during the crucial Lahore Session of 1929. The Lahore Session in December 1929 was a momentous one. It passed the historic resolution demanding complete independence and declaring that the word *Swarajya* in Article I of the Congress constitution meant 'complete independence', and that the 'entire scheme of the Nehru Committee Report should be considered to have lapsed.'¹⁰⁷ To make its policy as consistent as possible with the change in its creed, the Congress resolved upon complete boycott of the central and provincial legislatures and committees constituted by the government. It called upon Congressmen and other freedom fighters to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in elections, and directed Congress members of the legislatures and committees to resign their seats forthwith. It further appealed to the nation to prosecute zealously the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorized the AICC, whenever it deemed fit, to launch a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.

By another resolution the Congress declared that in view of the lapse of the Nehru Report it was necessary to reaffirm its policy on the communal question, for in independent India it could be solved on strictly national lines:

But as the Sikhs in particular, and the Muslims and other minorities in general, had expressed dissatisfaction at the solution of the communal

question proposed in the Nehru Report, the Congress assures the Sikhs, Muslims and other minorities that no solution thereof in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned.¹⁰⁸

During the session, Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Dr Ansari and some other members of the Congress Working Committee met Baba Kharak Singh to know his mind. The Baba told them that he wanted the Congress to declare in unequivocal words its goal of complete independence. To this Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders gladly agreed.

The Congress leaders also solved the crucial question of equal and fair treatment to the all minorities by drafting a resolution in the presence of Baba Kharak Singh. The resolution stated that the Congress would not accept any constitution which did not give equal and fair treatment to all minorities, particularly the Sikhs. Thus, the main points of difference between the Congress and Baba Kharak Singh were amicably resolved. To demonstrate their unity and solidarity with the Indian National Congress an All India Sikh Conference was organized to coincide with the Congress session at Lahore. In a fiery speech Baba Kharak Singh, who was elected President of the Conference, reiterated that he and his community were prepared to shed the last drop of their blood for the freedom of the motherland. In the course of a long speech he said:

In the fight for India's freedom if you find a bullet in my back do not count me as one amongst the Sikhs of the Gurus and do not cremate my dead body according to Sikh rites. A disciple of the Great Gurus is an ideal saint-soldier and is supposed to fight in the vanguard and face the bullet in the chest and not in the back. We, the Sikh, shall never allow any foreigner to rule our Motherland and we shall brook no injustice.¹⁰⁹

Master Tara Singh, President of the Central Sikh League and Vice-President of the SGPC, felt satisfied with the resolution passed by the Lahore session. He said:

There were people who were trying to lead the Sikhs into the bureaucratic snare. Congress leaders have risen to the occasion and acted like statesmen. Mahatma Gandhi is to be congratulated, for it is he who is mainly responsible for this resolution. I am sure that the Congress will gather great strength and a wave of enthusiasm will sweep the Sikhs.¹¹⁰

When the Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement the Sikh leadership again joined hands with the nationalist forces in ensuring the success of the Congress call. On 9 March 1930, the Shiromani Akali Dal offered 5,000 volunteers for the movement.¹¹¹ It also called upon all Sikhs to do their duty in this critical hour and rally under the

leadership of Mahatma Gandhi without being mindful of the fact that the Sikh colour had not been included in the national flag in spite of Gandhiji's assurance. Stating further that to keep aloof from the struggle was not in keeping with the noble traditions of the Sikhs, the Shiromani Akali Dal advised the Sikhs to join the struggle.

The Provincial Congress Committee reciprocated the gesture of the Akali leadership by nominating Master Tara Singh as a member of the 'War Council' to co-ordinate the Civil Disobedience Movement in the province. On the arrest of Dr Saif-ud-din Kitchlew, Tara Singh replaced him as 'Dictator' on this body. When in the heat of the Civil Disobedience Movement shooting took place in the North West Frontier Province, it stirred Master Tara Singh to the depth of his soul. He declared:

The Sikhs, in sympathy with their tyrannised countrymen, will shed their blood at the same place where the Pathans have shed it. It is said that the Sikhs and Pathans are each other's enemies. That is absolutely wrong. The Sikhs and Pathans are sons of the same Motherland, and if any such impression prevails that they are enemies, the Sikhs will wash it off by mingling their blood with that of the Pathans. The Sikhs must, therefore, go to their rescue and lay down their lives and do their duty honourably as enjoined upon them by their Gurus.¹¹²

He made this declaration at Jallianwala Bagh before a huge gathering. One hundred fearless Akalis volunteered to march to Peshawar, each fully determined to lay down his life for the country. It was like an army of dedicated martyrs. The jatha was stopped by the police at Dina, near Jhelum, and mercilessly lathi-charged till every member became unconscious. Master Tara Singh had been arrested while the jatha was still in Lahore and imprisoned at Gujarat.

Jaswant Singh led a Jatha of 100 Sikhs to break salt laws and was arrested along with members of his jatha. A large number of Sikhs from various parts of the province came out to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement. According to contemporary sources, out of 7,000 satyagrahis who were convicted in Punjab in connection with the movement, 3,000 were the Sikhs.¹¹³ In the words of Lala Duni Chand, a prominent Congress leader in Punjab, 'the Sikh community has perhaps sent proportionately the largest number to jail and has made glorious sacrifices'.¹¹⁴ Firing at Gurdwara Sis-Ganj, Delhi, and subsequent police excesses, and depression in the prices of agricultural goods further embittered the Sikhs, especially the rural peasantry, and brought a large number of Sikh extremists into the fold of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Punjab.¹¹⁵ The Shiromani Akali Dal and various Akali jathas launched a campaign of boycott and picketing of shops selling liquor.

It was the nationalist spirit and friendship with the Indian National

Congress which was greatly responsible for Master Tara Singh and his lieutenants persuading the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Central Sikh League to pass a formal resolution for boycott of general elections in response to the Congress call. On various other national issues Master Tara Singh's group commanded the confidence of the Sikh majority because of its close association with the Indian National Congress and other nationalist forces in the country. Baba Kharak Singh, who was the hero of the Akali Movement and at one time a staunch supporter of the Congress programme, lost rapport with the nationalist leadership on such issues as 'non-representation' of the Sikhs on the National Flag and other matters. Non-participation of Baba Kharak Singh and his group in the Civil Disobedience Movement further weakened Babaji's position in Sikh nationalist politics. On the other hand, Master Tara Singh's active participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement, his ability to carry with him a majority of the Sikh masses on the Congress call for boycott of general elections and his non-participation in the First Round Table Conference brought him even closer to the nationalist leadership.

That Master Tara Singh's name carried much weight in Sikh nationalist politics is evident from the fact that, on his refusal to attend the first Round Table Conference, the government selected a loyalist Sikh from the princely state of Patiala with the same name. During the annual session of the Central Sikh League, presided over by Master Tara Singh and attended by Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist leaders, it was clarified that Tara Singh, a judge of the Patiala High Court, who was sent to London to attend the First Round Table Conference in January 1931, was not a representative of the League. Master Tara Singh and his group agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference in London only after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed and Congress and Akali volunteers arrested in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement released.

Master Tara Singh and other Sikh representatives met Gandhiji before his departure for London to attend the Second Round Table Conference. As is well known, the Conference could not make any headway due to differences of opinion on communal representation. Gandhi returned disappointed only to resume the Civil Disobedience Movement. Since Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist leaders refused to attend the Round Table Conference, the Government tried to impose its own solution of the ticklish communal problem through the 'Communal Award' announced by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. As the Award conceded communal demands of the Muslim League and in fact ensured a permanent Muslim majority in the Punjab, the Sikhs' reaction to it was natural. Master Tara Singh and his supporters decided to oppose the Award and organized a Shahidi Dal of 100,000 Sikh

volunteers to fight communalism. In response to the Akali call, Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh resigned from the Consultative Committee of the Round Table Conference. The Congress attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting the Award greatly disturbed Master Tara Singh and other Sikh nationalists. While Tara Singh and others were busy persuading the Congress to reject the Award, the Government announced new elections in India as a result of the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935. Congress neutrality over the Communal Award and its inability to support the Sikhs over the Shahid Ganj issue made Master Tara Singh and other Sikh leaders believe that the Congress was compromising with growing Muslim communalism in Punjab. Under these circumstances he found it difficult to go with the Congress during the elections in the province, much less to forge an alliance with it. However he reiterated that this could not be taken as his dissociation from the nationalist struggle, and emphasized that he would be in the front-line in case the Congress launched a fresh struggle against the government. Finding the nationalist Sikhs discontented, the Congress leadership in Punjab tried to remove the Akali misgivings. The efforts of Dr Gopi Chand Bhargava and other Provincial Congress leaders for a rapprochement between the Congress and the Akali leadership resulted in the Akali Party coming back to the nationalist fold and announcing its decision to co-operate with the Congress Parliamentary Board in 'combating reactionary forces in this official-ridden province'.¹¹⁶ Soon after, an electoral adjustment between the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal was announced. Under this arrangement, the Akalis were to contest fourteen of the twenty-four agreed seats, ten being left to Congressite Sikhs. The Akali list included such later Congress stalwarts as Swaran Singh, Partap Singh Kairon and Giani Kartar Singh. The Akali Party also accepted that its candidates returned to the legislature would form part of the Congress Legislature Party in the province and would abide by the Congress discipline.

However, the 1937 elections to the Punjab Assembly resulted into a clear-cut majority for the Unionist Party, but, in spite of its absolute majority, Sikander Hyat Khan, leader of the Unionist Party, tried to win over other Hindu, Sikh and independent members of the assembly to strengthen his party's position. It was again thanks to the nationalism and fellow-feeling for the Congressmen that Master Tara Singh and his lieutenants stoutly resisted the overtures of Sikander Hyat and refused to support him or his policies in or outside the assembly. The growing influence of the Muslim League on the Unionist leadership and the signing of Sikander-Jinnah pact caused as much anxiety to the Sikhs as to the Congress leadership. To strengthen the Congress against the growing influence of the Muslim League on the Unionist government,

the Shiromani Akali Dal asked the Akali MLAs to join the Congress Party in the Punjab legislature. To the Akali leadership, the Sikander-Jinnah Pact appeared to be a definite move of reactionary forces to maintain the waning power and influence of British rule and a calculated move to check growing nationalism in the province.

Akali-Congress unity was clearly visible at the All India Akali Conference held at Rawalpindi under the presidentship of Baldev Singh, where the Akali and Congress flags were flown side by side.¹¹⁷ The conference expressed lack of confidence in the Unionist Government in Punjab and exhorted the Sikhs to join the Congress which was described by Baldev Singh as the trustee of our national honour and national self-respect.¹¹⁸ Closer Akali-Congress co-operation resulted in some Akali functionaries getting high positions in the Congress set-up at the provincial and national levels, including Master Tara Singh being taken as a member of the AICC Working Committee. It was this bond of friendship and a strong sense of nationalism which was greatly responsible for the Sikh leadership generally supporting the Congress stand during various parleys for transfer of power and, finally, the Sikhs casting their lot with Independent India at the time of partition on 15 August 1947.

Notes and References

1. This Nirankari Movement was different from the Sant Nirankari Mandal of Delhi. For a detailed account of this movement see Man Singh Nirankari's article on the subject in the Singh Sabha Number of *Panjab Past and Present*, April, 1973, and John C.B. Webster's *The Nirankari Sikhs*.
2. For a detailed account of the Namdharis, popularly known as the Kukas, see Fauja Singh, *The Kuka Movement*, Ganda Singh's *Kukian di Vithia* (in Punjabi) and M.M. Ahluwalia, *Kukas: The Pioneer Freedom Fighters of Panjab*.
3. For a detailed account see Ganda Singh (ed.), Singh Sabha Number of the *Panjab Past and Present*, April, 1973.
4. For details see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, pp. 8-9.
5. Secret C.I.D. Memorandum quoted in Mohinder Singh, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Sunder Singh, *Ki Khalsa College Sikhan da Hai?* (in Punjabi) consulted at the Proscribed Indian Books collection of the British Museum, London.
11. Ibid.
12. For a detailed account see Satya M. Rai, *Evolution of Heroic Tradition in Panjab*, pp. 9-26.
13. For a detailed, scholarly account of the Ghadr see Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation and Strategy*.

14. For a detailed account see Satya M. Rai, *Evolution of Heroic Tradition in Panjab*, pp. 107-31.
15. *The Tribune*, 14 October 1919.
16. Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, pp. 197-284.
17. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XVII, p. 174.
18. Ian Colvin, *Life of General Dyer*, p. 201.
19. *Ibid.*; *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 25 Jan. 1920, also confirms this.
20. D. Petrie, Secret C.I.D. Memorandum on Recent Development in Sikh Politics, reproduced in Ganda Singh (ed.), *Panjab Past and Present*, October 1970, pp. 301-79.
21. *Gurdwara Reform Movement and Sikh Awakening*, p. 92.
22. For a detailed account of the incident see Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi*, pp. 198-219.
23. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Panjab* (in Punjabi), pp. 12-13.
24. Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*, p. 17.
25. For instance Mahant Narain of Nanakana's income was between four and five lakh rupees per annum in those days. Quoted in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, pp. 20-1.
26. For details about the origin of the word Akali see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, n. 18, p. 157.
27. Quoted in Hira Singh Dard, *Merian Kujh Itihasik Yadan*.
28. For detailed accounts see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*; and Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*.
29. Munsha Singh Dukhi, *Jiwan Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid*, p. 121.
30. *The Khalsa Advocate*, May-June, 1906.
31. Resolutions of the Central Sikh League, Resolution No. 14, consulted at the British Museum, London (P.I.B. Collection).
32. Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*, p. 41.
33. Quoted in Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, p. 41.
34. For a detailed account of the SGPC see Mohinder Singh, quoted above, pp. 87-92.
35. For details see Narain Singh (ed.), *Akali Morche te Jhabbar*, p. 61.
36. *Gurdwara Reform and Sikh Awakening*, p. 207.
37. For details of the letter from King see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, Appendix I, p. 195.
38. *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 10 April 1921, consulted at British Newspaper Library, Colindale, London.
39. Punjab Legislative Council *Proceedings*, 11 March 1921.
40. Quoted in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 7 August 1921.
41. *The Tribune*, 10 July 1921.
42. *Ibid.*, 15 September 1921.
43. Arjan Das's statement quoted in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 7 August 1921.
44. Evidence of approver Amar Singh Patwari, quoted in *The Tribune*, 12 April 1921.
45. *The Tribune*, 9 September 1921.
46. Letter No. 30 of 21 August 1922 from Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India to

Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, quoted in the Hailey Papers, Mss Eur E 238, Vol. III, India Office, London.

47. *The Akali*, 24 February 1921.
48. For instance see *The Brahman Samachar* of 9 March and the *Vedic Magazine* of March 1921.
49. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, pp. 397-8.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 401.
52. Ibid., pp. 420-1.
53. *The Panth Sewak*, combined issue, Nov. 9-16, 1921.
54. *The Akali*, 20 November 1921.
55. *Bande Mataram*, 26 November 1921.
56. File No. 459/1921, Home-Poll, NAI.
57. *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 22 November 1921.
58. Quoted in file No. 459/1921, Home-Poll, NAI.
59. *The Akali*, 29 November 1921.
60. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXII. p. 170.
61. *Fortnightly Review*, September 1923 (The Sikh Situation in Panjab by Komma).
62. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement*, p. 11.
63. Quoted in *Gurdwara Reform Movement*, p. 399.
64. *Proceedings*, Punjab Legislative Council, March 1922, Vol. IV, pp. 470-1.
65. *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 21 September 1922.
66. File No. 949/1922, Home-Poll, NAI.
67. File No. 914-II/1922, Home-Poll, NAI.
68. *Proceedings of the Punjab Legislative Council*, 1922, Vol. IV, pp. 468-9.
69. Punjab Government Order No. 23772, dated 12 October 1923. For text see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, Appendix III, p. 198.
70. For details see pp. 63-7 of the book quoted above.
71. *The Akali*, 13 August 1923.
72. *The Nation*, 15 August 1923.
73. Ibid.
74. SGPC Resolutions, quoted in file 628-3/p, Foreign-Political/1924, NAI.
75. *Akali-te-Pardesi*, 9 July 1923.
76. Communiqué of 10 July 1923, quoted in file No. 628-3/p, 1924, pp. 183-84, NAI.
77. Ibid.
78. Communiqué No. 94, quoted in the above file.
79. See note 97 below.
80. Ibid.
81. J. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, p. 747.
82. File 914/1924, Home-Poll.
83. Ibid.
84. *The Milap*, 20 February 1924, quoted in the Native Press Abstracts at the National Archives of India, New Delhi.
85. *Quarterly Register*, April 1924.
86. Ibid.
87. *Loyal Gazette*, Lahore, 24 February 1924.

88. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXIII, p. 211.
89. For text of the correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Akali leaders see Ganda Singh (ed.), *Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement*, pp. 45-55.
90. Hailey Papers, Mss Eur E 220-B-A, India Office Library, London.
91. For details of the circumstances leading to the passage of the bill, see Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement*, pp. 126-36.
92. For details see Mohinder Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8.
93. Report of the Cocanada session of the Congress quoted in the *Tribune*, 1 January 1924.
94. *Ibid.*
95. Since published in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. I, pp. 369-86.
96. *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 4 December 1921.
97. From the AICC Files (1919-24) at the NMML.
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100. Sukhmani Bal, cited above, pp. 193-5.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
102. A.M. and S.G. Zaidi, *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. IX, p. 261.
103. Kailash Gulati, *Akalis Past and Present*, pp. 32-33.
104. *The Tribune*, 29 February 1928.
105. Master Tara Singh's presidential address at the Central Sikh League meeting, quoted in *The Tribune*, 16 October 1929.
106. *Ibid.*
107. A.M. and S.G. Zaidi, *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. IX, pp. 670-1.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 672.
109. Prem Singh Sodhbans (ed.), *Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth*, p. 176.
110. *The Tribune*, 4 January 1930.
111. Kailash Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present*, p. 55.
112. *Ibid.*
113. Quoted in K.L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics*, p. 150.
114. *Ibid.*
115. Letter dated 10 May 1930 from de Mountmorency, Governor of Punjab, to Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, Halifax papers, NMML.
116. *The Tribune*, 20 November 1936.
117. *Ibid.*, 29 November 1938.
118. *Ibid.*

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APPENDIX

Draft Statement of Jawaharlal Nehru to be Read in Court at Nabha

I do not desire to defend myself in this proceeding, which has been started against me, or in any other proceeding which the present administration of Nabha may take against me. I write this statement to inform the Court of the facts as I know them and to correct some incorrect statements that have been made. I further wish to make clear the object of my visit to Nabha.

I have had every courtesy from this Court and I have no grievance against it. Indeed there is little room for any grievance or complaint where the Court has merely acted as a post office to convey the orders of some one else who has kept in the background. When at Jaito I read in the order served on me that a certain Mr J. Wilson Johnston purported to be the present 'Administrator of Nabha State'. I had never heard of this gentleman before. I have read in the papers that the administration of Nabha has been changed, the Maharaja made to retire and some other arrangement had been made. But I am not aware under what law this change in the Administration had been made and an 'Administrator' appointed. Nor do I know that any mention is made in the Criminal Procedure Code or Indian Penal Code of the 'Administrator' or of his right to issue orders under Section 144 Criminal Penal Code. Ever since my arrival at Jaito however I have been repeatedly confronted with the name or designation of the present 'Administrator' of Nabha. To almost every question that I have asked the reply has been given that the 'Administrator' will decide. Even the most trivial matters which have been provided for in the jail manual have been referred to him. Under-trial prisoners are supposed to possess certain rights — to consult their relatives and advisers, to write letters through the jail authorities, etc. I have been prevented from seeing or communicating with any person outside and have been informed that such is the order of the 'Administrator'. The Court informed me on one occasion that we would be allowed to write letters home if the jail rules so allowed but immediately after came the orders of the 'Administrator' that this would not be permitted. Even a request for a change of clothes had to be referred to the 'Administrator' and it took two full days before I was allowed to take out a change from my luggage. Yesterday morning I presented an application to the Court insisting on my right, as an under-trial prisoner, to interview my relatives and advisers and also to write letters. A second sitting of the Court took place in the afternoon and I was informed that my application had been sent to the 'Administrator' who had passed

certain orders on it. Thus on the admission of the Court, it is the 'Administrator' who takes upon himself the business of deciding on our applications, and the Court has merely the pleasant function of transmitting his orders to us. The whole trial becomes a farce if the Court is relegated to this position. We are not being tried in a Court of law but in a feeble parody of it with the 'Administrator' sitting in the background somewhere behind the purdah, issuing orders to his marionettes who have to carry out his bidding without thought or reason. Indeed the 'Administrator' is like Pooh-Bah of the Mikado, the Lord High Everything, and interferes in every matter, judicial or executive.

I am informed that my father was in Nabha yesterday. He had come all the way from Allahabad to see me and advise me but we have not been permitted to see each other. I merely point this out as an instance of the ways in which the Nabha State is administered at present.

My companions and I had read in the papers about strange doings in Nabha and Jaito. We decided to come here for a couple of days to see what was happening. We also wanted to see in what manner the Akali Sikhs were meeting the situation. We therefore proceeded to Muktsar and from there we went by road on horseback and bullock cart towards Jaito. On our way we passed Akali Jathas. About two or three miles from Jaito we caught up with a Jatha and discarding our bullock cart and horse we decided to walk along in their wake. Thus we arrived at Jaito. When the Jatha was stopped at Jaito we stood by to see what was happening. We were asked by the police or military who we were and what our object was. We told them that we were obviously not Akalis or members of the Jatha. We had come along with them to note developments. We continued watching from the roadside. The statement of the Superintendent of Police of Jaito to the effect that we were forcibly kept back from proceeding further — *hath phaila ke roke gai* — is, like many other statements made by the worthy member of the police force in this and in another proceeding, a lie. There was no object in our trying to force our way. We had come to watch and we stood aside to see the Jatha and the police. Just then the Superintendent of Police came and showed me an order under Section 144 signed by Mr Wilson Johnston as 'Administrator' of Nabha State. I accepted the service of this order and informed the Superintendent that I did not intend leaving Nabha territory. My companions and I then went to a small building nearby — I think it is called the *Dharamshala* — and sat down in the verandah as the sun was hot outside. A little later the Superintendent of Police returned with some others, one of whom we were told was the District Magistrate of the place. We were formally arrested under Section 188. My companions pointed out that no order had been served on them so far but this difficulty was got over by the District Magistrate pronouncing an oral

order against them under Section 144 Criminal Penal Code. As my friends are dealing with their part of the case I need not say more about it. I may mention however that the statement of the Superintendent of Police of Jaito that my companions refused to sign the order under Section 144 is an untruth. They were never asked to sign. I am sure that they would have willingly signed if they had been asked to do so. These are the facts leading up to our arrest. I do not desire to take advantage of any technicalities but I wish to make it clear that the order under Section 144 was not a *bona fide* order. There was not the slightest danger of our visit resulting in a breach of public tranquillity and I make bold to say that the 'Administrator' knew this. Indeed, our entry into Nabha territory, our stay there for some hours and eventually our arrest, did not as a matter of fact result in any disturbance of the public peace. The only peace that it probably disturbed was the peace of mind of the 'Administrator'. The issuing of this order under Section 144 is a prostitution of legal process. It was not meant to serve an object contemplated by the law but merely to prevent outsiders from entering Nabha State. The State has apparently become sacred territory where none may enter who is not prepared to bow down to the 'Administrator'.

The order refers to our membership of the All India Congress Committee and gives as a reason for the fear of breach of peace the recent resolutions of the Congress Committee. I take it that the 'Administrator' is not well up in what is happening outside Nabha State and in his ignorance has referred to the resolutions of the Special Congress held at Delhi as resolutions of the 'Congress Committee'. I have thus been arrested in my capacity as a member of the All India Congress Committee. The 'Administrator's' references to the Congress and the Committee are unbecoming and insulting and as a humble member of that national body I cannot tolerate any such impertinence.

I have stated above that my object in visiting Nabha State was to find out the truth of various allegations made against the present administration. That object has been largely served and I have to thank the 'Administrator' and his underlings for the speedy discovery to the true state of affairs in Nabha. Our arrest soon after we entered Nabha territory on a peaceful mission of enquiry, our subsequent treatment, our seclusion from all outside contact, the refusal to permit us to see our advisers and relatives, the refusal to allow us to send any letters or other communications even as under-trial prisoners and lastly the farce of a trial which we are undergoing, are eloquent testimony of the present state of Nabha. I have no personal knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the State during Maharaja Ripudaman Singh's rule but I can say from personal knowledge that the present conditions are scandalous and shocking. No man who values his honour and refuses to

bow down to the 'Administrator' is apparently safe. High officials of the old Nabha administration are at present in the jail with us, their crime being apparently their loyalty to their old chief. They are not tried, nor is a charge brought against them. The old system of *letters de cachet* evidently finds favour with the 'Administrator' of Nabha State. Others who have been tried are little better off. Their trials are farcical and monstrous sentences are awarded to them. Trials are practically conducted in camera and outsiders are seldom if ever admitted. Even in our case when there was some inducement to the authorities to observe the forms of law, people were seldom allowed to enter. They were stopped outside in spite of my drawing the attention of the Court repeatedly to this fact. To all our protests the answer is given: such is the way in Nabha State. It has not taken us long to discover the way in Nabha State under the present 'Administrator'.

We have also come across in jail respected members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee treated as ordinary felons although they have not even been sentenced yet. Many Akalis in the jail have been on hunger strike for some time.

I should also like to state here as an instance of Nabha justice certain proceedings taken against us yesterday. Late in the evening, after dusk and after we had already had two sittings of this court, we were taken to a room and made to sit there. There were others present there including our old acquaintance the Superintendent of Police of Jaito and the Court Inspector. With us was placed another prisoner in chains. Suddenly the Court Inspector started questioning the Superintendent of Police. I enquired what was happening and was told that a fresh proceeding had started against us. We were being charged under Section 145 I.P.C. for being members or leaders of an unlawful assembly. No notice or warrant or any kind of information had been given to us of this proceeding. I told the Court that this was the most extraordinary procedure I had heard of outside a stage and it was utterly opposed to all law and procedure. The proceedings however continued, the farce was gone through. The Superintendent of Police of Jaito excelled himself and drew upon his imagination to remarkable extent. He improved upon his old story as stated in this Court and gave utterance to more lies in a few minutes than I can remember. We were charged with refusal to disperse after we had been ordered to do so. I was not aware till I came to Nabha under arrest that any Jatha had been declared to be an unlawful assembly. Nor was anyone, in my hearing, asked to disperse. The Jatha was asked to go back and not to proceed further. They refused to turn back and sat down on the road. My companions and I were not asked to go away or disperse. I was shown the order under Section 144 which

I refused to obey and then, as I have stated above, we went and sat in the verandah of the *Dharamshala*. There we were arrested. It is somewhat difficult for me to understand how persons under arrest can disperse.

Our co-accused in this proceeding was one Darbara Singh. He was stated by the imaginative Superintendent of Police to have been the leader of the Jatha and to have contumaciously refused to disperse his Jatha. This is an absolute lie and I can speak from personal knowledge of it. Darbara Singh was never with the Jatha. Every member of the Jatha wore a black turban. Darbara Singh had a saffron-coloured turban on and so could easily be recognised. Darbara Singh met my companions and me when we were riding quite separated from the Jatha some miles from Jaito. As we did not know the way he was good enough to guide us. When we started walking, Darbara Singh took my pony and marched with my luggage and with my luggage he went to Jaito station. He was nowhere near the Jatha when the police or the military stopped it, nor was he arrested there. He was probably arrested at the station where he happened to be with my luggage. The whole story of Darbara Singh as stated by the Jaito Superintendent of Police is a lie and is clearly an afterthought.

This is the justice of the present administration of Nabha. The Jatha which came to jail has, I believe, been released but Darbara Singh, a man who had nothing to do with it, has been run in for leading that Jatha. Darbara Singh has suffered for his country for many years. He has suffered internment in jail and has been shot at by British troops ever since he came back on the *Komagata Maru*. I am proud to be put in the same dock with him and trust that I shall exhibit the same courage as he has shown on numerous occasions.

Various proceedings are being taken against us in Nabha Courts. I have pointed out how utterly illegal and groundless they are. My friend and co-accused Mr Santanam has dealt with the law and I do not desire to say anything more about it. We do not desire to take advantage of any technical or legal plea. I merely point them out to show how unscrupulous the proceedings are. It is my business to combat the British Government in India and all its works and I shall continue to do so till we have achieved success. The straight thing to do is to run me in for sedition and I shall gladly and joyfully admit the charge. But the ways of the Nabha administration are not straight. They are crooked.

I rejoice that I am being tried for a cause which the Sikhs have made their own. I was in jail when the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle was gallantly fought and won by the Sikhs. I marvelled at the courage and sacrifice of the Akalis and wished that I could be given an opportunity of showing my deep admiration of them by some form of service. That opportunity

has now been given to me and I earnestly hope that I shall prove worthy of their high tradition and fine courage. *Sat Sri Akal*.*

Central Jail
Nabha

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

25 September 1923

10.30 a.m.

*This is a copy of the first handwritten draft statement in 'Papers relating to Nabha Trial' at the Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi (since published in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* edited by Dr S. Gopal). Since the original draft contained a few paragraphs which were highly critical of the British Administrator of Nabha and the administrative and judicial machinery in the State and greatly appreciated the Akali Sikhs and their struggle, his father, who visited Nabha in connection with his son's court defence, 'replaced these paragraphs with a closely argued statement written with the cold pen of a lawyer. It was the changed version which was actually read by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Nabha court on 28 September 1923. For lack of space it is not possible to append the revised version for which the reader is advised to see Ganda Singh (ed.), *Panjab Past and Present*, October 1970, pp. 425-31. Also see S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. I, and Barun De, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Freedom Struggle', published in the *Indian Historical Review*, January 1979.

Chapter VI

The Congress and Constitutional Reforms (1919-1935)

J.P. Misra

THE CONGRESS DEMAND for constitutional reforms and the resulting process of democratization must be set against the background of the First World War. It changed the political situation in the country beyond recognition, quickened the political consciousness of the people and largely augmented their demand for political responsibility. During the course of the war, which was fought to 'make the world safe for democracy', the British Prime Minister enunciated the principle of self determination and declared that the Indian constitutional problem would be looked at 'from a new angle of vision'.¹

The Congress leaders took this and similar pronouncements seriously and were busy chalking out schemes of constitutional reform. In 1915, G.K. Gokhale submitted a scheme in which he proposed that 'the grant of provincial autonomy would be a fitting concession to make to the people of India at the close of the war'. During the next year a memorandum signed by nineteen elected Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council was submitted to the viceroy. It proposed a scheme of reforms with the hope that the 'termination of war will see a great advance in the ideals of government'. In December 1916 the Congress and the Muslim League agreed to joint action in favour of political reforms. The joint venture of the Congress and Muslim League resulted in the formulation and adoption of the well-known Congress-League Scheme. It provided for elected majorities in the councils, reorganization of the Viceroy's Executive Council, separate electorates for Muslims and representational weightage for minorities in the legislatures.

None of these schemes, however, appreciated the fact that a fundamental change in the principle of administration of India was necessary if the government of the country was to be further liberalized. The Congress leaders had thought it possible to build on the then existing constitutional framework. Their schemes urged the British government to recognize that the 'situation demanded new handling'.²

Hence the declaration of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin S. Montagu, in the House of Commons in August 1917, specifying the initiation of a long-drawn process of democratization. In terms of phraseology it was a typical piece of calculated writing, bold enough to promise 'self governing institutions' and 'responsible government' for India and cautious enough to qualify them by phrases like 'gradual development' and 'progressive realization' and 'as an integral part of the British Empire'.³ The announcement was a curious combination of liberal sincerity and imperial self-interest. It pledged the coveted goal of responsible government in India but left its implementation to the discretion of the British government.

As a preliminary to considering what substantial steps should be taken in pursuance of the August declaration, the Secretary of State decided to visit India to have on the spot consultations with the officials as well as the nationalist leaders. He declared the purpose of his visit in the following words: 'My visit to India means that we are going to do something and something big. I cannot go home and produce a little thing or nothing; it must be something epoch-making or it is a failure; it must be the keystone to the future history of India.'⁴ During his visit to the country the Congress submitted to him a memorandum which provides the best clue to an understanding of its demands. The Congress asked for an assurance that successive steps in the direction of self-government would be taken at 'regular intervals not far removed from one another'. It demanded for India a position of equality with the Dominions, affirmed that the claims of Indians for eventual self-government rested on 'more grounds than one' and desired that substantial steps should be taken in that direction. The memorandum ended with the following assertion: 'Above and beyond everything is the natural right of every people, inherent and inalienable, to be in their own country what other peoples are in their native lands. It is their birthright and their very self-respect and the honour of their nation demands its unflinching assertion.'⁵

The scheme of constitutional advance, as it finally emerged in July 1918, had none of the grandeur which Montagu had intended it to possess. The Joint Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, which was the result of Montagu's consultations in India, was a disappointing document. It emphasized the backwardness of the vast majority of the Indian people, the social and communal barriers which divided them and the essentially undemocratic character of the caste system, and concluded that no important change could be made in the Central Government. Though the report contained the strongest condemnation of communal electorates it recommended not only their retention in the case of the Muslim community but also their extension

to the Sikhs. It proposed to make an experiment of responsible government in the provinces but even there it refused to transfer complete responsibility to popular representatives. It proposed the introduction of dyarchy. As for the Centre the report stressed the need of keeping the Executive as independent of the control of the Legislature as before. A further consolidation of the forces of reaction was proposed through the establishment of a Chamber of Princes.

1. The Congress Reaction to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

With the publication of the report on constitutional reforms 'markedly different opinions' were voiced by the Congress leaders⁶ belonging to the two schools of thought, the Moderates and the Extremists. On the day the report was published, Annie Besant remarked: 'The scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India. It is petty where it should have been large and banal where it should have been striking.' On the same day, fifteen leading Congressmen issued a statement from Madras in which they said: 'The scheme is so radically wrong alike in principle and detail that in our opinion it would be impossible to modify or improve it.' Tilak was 'greatly disappointed' and declared that it was 'entirely unacceptable'. The *Hindu* wrote: 'The proposals violate the fundamental principle upon which popular governments are based in the civilized world and is based upon unfounded and deep-rooted distrust of the capacities and character of the country.'⁷

In sharp contrast to these views, the Moderates lost no time in coming forward to the rescue of the government. Surendranath Banerjea called a conference at Calcutta in which a resolution was passed welcoming the reform scheme as accomplishing a real and definite stage in the realization of responsible government.

The Congress met in a special session at Bombay towards the end of August 1918 for the 'single purpose' of considering the reform proposals. The chairman of the reception committee explained that the Congressmen had 'gathered under a profound sense of grave responsibility' and observed that 'in these thirty-three years of its existence the Congress never had a weightier duty to discharge than the one that has been laid upon it at this special sitting.' This was the first special session of the Congress. The extraordinary procedure adopted to consider the 'Montford' report was indicative of the fact that a large section of its members attached great importance to the constitutional proposals. The Congress decided to put forward its demands in terms as clear as possible. The session declared that nothing less than self-government within the Empire would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. It stressed that the people of India were fit for responsible government and repudiated the assumption to the contrary contained in

the Report. It disagreed with the formula that the provinces were the domain in which the earlier steps should be taken towards progressive realization of responsible government, leaving the authority of the government of India, in essential matters, indisputable. The session demanded a statutory guarantee for the establishment of full and complete responsible government within fifteen years. It pronounced the Montford proposals as 'disappointing and unsatisfactory' and suggested 'modifications' to make the proposed scheme as democratic as possible.⁹

Several moderate leaders, notable among them being Dinshaw Wacha, Surendranath Banerjea, T.B. Saprú and C.Y. Chintamani, had decided to stay away from the special Congress session. They held a separate All-India Moderate Conference on 1 and 2 November 1918 and formed themselves into a separate party called the National Liberal Federation. They approved of the reforms as a substantial step and extended co-operation to the government to make it a success. The essential difference between the two wings of the Congress was the desire of the Moderates to work the reforms, while the others ruled out the possibility of any such co-operation, so fierce was their denunciation of the Montford scheme.

The regular session of the Congress, held at Delhi in December 1918, revealed a more resolute spirit and a new determination. It went further than the special session and urged that full responsible government be granted to the provinces at the very outset. An entirely new departure in the Congress proceedings was its deep interest in the events outside India. Its resolution on self-determination revealed this in no uncertain terms. Through this the 'Congress claimed the recognition of India by the British Parliament and by the Peace Conference as one of the Progressive Nations to whom the principle of Self-Determination should be applied.'⁹ These discussions aroused much hostile official comment. The impression of the Government of India was that the Congress was 'drifting into dangerous waters and if not restrained in time it is sure to come into conflict with Government'. It expressed the fear that 'if those who constituted the bulk of the Congress at Delhi are taken to be the representatives of the educated classes in India it would be futile to expect much from this organisation.'¹⁰

2. The Amritsar Congress

By the time the annual session of the Congress was held at Amritsar, in December 1919, the Reform Act had been passed. The new constitutional measure appeared 'unsatisfactory to everyone'.¹¹ The mood of most Congressmen was reflected in the resolution moved by C.R. Das and supported by such Congress stalwarts as Lokamanya Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. It reiterated the previous year's declaration that India was

fit for responsible government, declared that the Act was 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing' and asked the British Parliament 'to take early steps to establish full Responsible Government in India in accordance with the principle of Self-Determination'.

This meant rejection of the reforms. This resolution was, however, modified in the open session due to the intervention of Gandhi. He moved an amendment committing the Congress to co-operate in working the Reforms. Finally, a compromise was arrived at substantially incorporating Gandhi's amendment. The Congress pledged itself to 'so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government'.¹² The proceedings of the Congress made it clear that a cleavage was developing within the Congress. But the irony of the position was that while C.R. Das was inclined to obstruction and rejection, Gandhi was there as the apostle of co-operation. In the following year the cleavage became wider. But the position of the groups led by Gandhi and C.R. Das was reversed.¹³

At Amritsar Gandhi's was the voice of caution and accommodation. The events of the next few months, the Treaty of Sevres with Turkey, the Hunter Committee Report and the approval of General Dyer's action, both in and outside the Parliament, acted as catalysts. These events transformed the Congress into a new body with a new ideology and a new strategy. Gandhi's attitude underwent a radical change. He explained the change in a statement:

When at Amritsar I pleaded for co-operation with the Government . . . I did so because I honestly believed that a new era was about to begin. . . . But to my amazement and dismay I have discovered that the present representatives of the Empire have become dishonest and unscrupulous. . . . I can no longer retain affection for a Government so evilly manned as it is nowadays.¹⁴

3. The Impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement

It has been pointed out that 'two primary conditions' were necessary for giving effect to the Act of 1919. The first requirement was the whole-hearted co-operation of as many political groups or organizations as possible. Another pre-condition was to put the main provisions to test for a reasonable period.¹⁵ Success or failure of the constitutional scheme depended on its actual working. Neither of the two needs were met. The two questions were interlinked from the very beginning as the British emphasized that 'progressive realization' of the goal was the only safe course while the Congress looked at this argument with disbelief. By the time the Act was launched the political condition in the country had changed completely. The Congress decided to start the Non-Cooperation Movement by the close of 1920. It further announced that it

would not only abstain from all active co-operation with the government but also have nothing to do with the Act.

The attitude of the Congress to the Act of 1919 in general and the reformed councils in particular was discussed, at length, in the Special Congress Session held at Calcutta. From the very beginning of the session Gandhi called for a total rejection of the measure. His main argument was that 'the Reform Act had not been framed so as to grant immediate Swaraj'. He observed that 'the Councils were a trap, a death trap, in which they should not enter'. Elaborating his view he said: 'It is my firm conviction that the services public men want to render can be rendered outside the councils rather than inside and such services will be infinitely greater than the services they render in the councils.'¹⁶

There were two aspects of the boycott of councils. According to the first part of the programme, the Congressmen did not offer themselves as candidates at the election to the Reformed Councils held in November 1919. When the Congress boycotted these elections, only the Moderates were left in the field as candidates. This gave an air of unreality to the elections as there was no contest between different political groups having different political policies and programmes. The second part of the Congress programme was 'refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who, despite the Congress advice, offers himself for election'. The result was that, even according to the official calculation, not more than 20 per cent of the electors cast their votes for the Legislative Assembly. Available reports indicate that, in Central Provinces, out of 52 constituencies, 7 had no candidates and 33 had no contested elections. The poll dropped to as low as 8 per cent in Bombay and 5 per cent in Lahore.

The Duke of Connaught, who inaugurated the new constitution on 1 January 1921, saw 'bitterness and estrangement between those who have been and should be friends'. Such an atmosphere was not conducive to any worthwhile constitutional experiment in the country on the basis of the Reform Act of 1919.

In his presidential address to the Ahmedabad Congress session of 1921, which was read in his absence, C.R. Das made a detailed review of the fundamental principles on which the Act of 1919 was based and observed that 'our right, our inherent right to regulate our own affairs, develop our own individuality and evolve our own destiny' had not been recognized. By this time, the Congress was voicing its objections more to the fundamental prepositions than to structural changes incorporated in the Act. C.R. Das's address was a case in this respect. He maintained that, 'Freedom is my birthright and I demand a recognition of that right not by instalments nor in compartments but whole and entire.' He made another point in the following words:

I resent the doctrine that the Parliament is to determine the time and manner of each advance. . . . In other words if we are good boys and if we satisfy the British Parliament that we have a sense of responsibility, then the British Parliament will consider whether we ought to have a further instalment of reforms. In other words we are perpetual infants and the British Parliament is our sole guardian.

His address enunciated the view that the constitutional structure should not be outlined by any outside body but by Indians themselves. Concluding the address, he asked Congressmen to fix their eyes on the 'ultimate and reject as essentially false anything that does not recognise the freedom of the Indian people'.¹⁷

4. The Swarajist Interlude

The suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement led to a reorientation of the Congress strategy. The pendulum swung back to constitutional politics, the Swaraj Party was formed within the Congress and it was decided to enter the Legislative Assembly and the provincial councils to expose the limited and irresponsible character of the Reform Act of 1919. The rise of Swaraj Party under the leadership of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru was a new development in Congress politics.

The twofold Swarajist line of action was to wreck the Reforms from within the legislatures and to draw 'the attention of the public to the need for stating fundamental principles'. The Swarajists pointed out that the guiding motive of the Act was to safeguard British interests. They were powerful advocates of the inherent right of Indians 'to frame a constitution adopting such machinery and system as are most suited to the conditions of the country and the genius of the people.' Motilal Nehru forcefully asserted this view: 'I do not think anything deserves the name of a constitution for a country in the making of which the people of the country did not have a voice.'¹⁸

The tone of the nationalist demand for constitutional advance was set in the very first session of the Legislative Assembly. On 8 February 1924, Motilal Nehru moved a resolution demanding 'a complete overhauling of the Government of India Act'. In unequivocal terms he declared that it was a bad Act which had done great injustice to India in that the preamble and the subsequent provisions of the measure had refused to India the full rights of responsible government. He made it clear that he was not asking 'for complete responsible government to be handed over to us tied in a bundle' but that the British Government should recognize the right of Indians to self-determination and convene 'a Round Table Conference or committee to examine the entire problem of the future government of India'. He wanted the proposed conference to be really representative, consisting of the nominees of the government and the

various interests in the country. As for the immediate changes in the Act of 1919 his main proposal was that the right of self-determination should receive a clear recognition in it. Explaining the strategy of the Swarajists he warned the government: 'We have come to offer co-operation, non-cooperators as we are, if you care to co-operate with us. That is why we are here. If you agree to have it we are your men; if you do not, we shall like men stand upon our rights and continue to be non-cooperators.'¹⁹ The Swarajists had taken upon themselves to extend the hand of friendship towards the Government of India. They had taken the initiative in opening the dialogue on constitutional reforms; the ball was now in the other court.

During the course of the debate, various nationalist leaders supported Motilal Nehru's demand for immediate and substantial advance. M.M. Malaviya, M.A. Jinnah, Vithalbhai Patel, R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, P.D. Thakurdas and others, speaking on the occasion, called for giving a new look to the Act. In a forthright speech, Jinnah asked the Home Member: 'Why do you want to sit behind closed doors, in the secret chambers of the Executive? Why do you want to carry on your despatches backwards and forwards behind our backs? . . . the proposal of yours is putting the cart before the horse. We want you to take the people with you.' It would be sufficient to analyse one more speech delivered on the occasion. Explaining the background of the Congress stand, Vithalbhai Patel said that the nationalists were no longer interested in constitutional changes 'by stages'. He stressed the point in the following words: 'I am perfectly clear in my mind of what I want and what the Indian National Congress wants. We want complete responsible government all at once. There is no doubt about it. Let us not mince matters.'²⁰

This was the first debate on the Congress demand for a detailed review of the Act of 1919. As the Swarajists had entered the legislatures only a few months before, much depended on the way the arguments were presented and later acted upon. The elected members of the Assembly solidly stood in favour of the demand which was carried in the House by 64 votes to 48. That the Swarajists could carry their demand in spite of the wishes of the government showed not only their strength but also the wide support which they enjoyed. The Assembly approved the 'National Demand' in a most unequivocal manner.

Such expressions of disappointment with the provisions of the Act of 1919 forced the hands of the authorities and led to an exchange of correspondence at the highest level. The viceroy referred to the 'mistrust even of moderates and well-disposed sections of our intention to proceed with reforms'. In a confidential note the Government of India analysed the demands of the Congress: 'Whenever Indians talk of Dominion Self Government we tell them that there is still great deal to

be done for it and as a consequence they believe that the whole of the scheme is intended to delude them.'²¹ It would appear that though the Government of India re-examined its policy it had neither the will nor the inclination to take any bold decision. Its response was so limited and halting that it failed to convince the Swarajists. The Government of India appointed the Reform Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, to enquire into the working of the Act. It spent eight months over its deliberations and yet could not submit any unanimous verdict. There were, in fact, two reports, one described as the Majority Report, signed by five members, and the other, the Minority Report, signed by M.A. Jinnah, T.B. Saprú, Sivaswami Aiyar and Paranjape. The Majority Report toed the official line, pointing out the difficulties in the working of the Act. It recommended minor amendments in the Act without affecting the basic structure. The Minority Report, representing the Swarajist viewpoint on constitutional advance, pointed out that the Act needed structural changes. It condemned the system of dyarchy in particular and asked for full responsible government in the provinces. Discussions on the reports in the Legislative Assembly indicated that the Government of India was not prepared to accept any fundamental changes in the Act. The result was that, in spite of the efforts of the Swarajists, the deadlock over constitutional reforms continued.

The demand for a Constituent Assembly was gradually taking shape and gained strength every day under the Swarajist banner. The demand, in fact, lay in the nature of things. In a general way the demand was put forward by Gandhi in 1922 when he laid down that India's political destiny should be determined by Indians themselves. In a specific sense the demand had been put forward by the Swarajist leaders since the very formation of the party within the Congress. As early as in February 1923, the Swaraj Party, at its meeting in Allahabad, specified its object of securing the right of framing the constitution in conformity with the country's traditions. Another effective step was taken in February 1924 when Motilal Nehru submitted the National Demand in the Legislative Assembly to which reference has already been made. A few months later C.R. Das, referring to the need of summoning such a Constituent Assembly, remarked, 'What they wanted was a clear declaration by the people of the country that they had got the right to establish their own system of government according to the temper and genius of the people and they wanted that right to be recognised by their alien rulers.'²²

5. Efforts to Frame a Swaraj Scheme

During the post-non-cooperation period, the Congress policy was not

limited to the criticism of the Act of 1919. There was considerable thinking on offering alternative proposals, chalking out a scheme of reforms and, as far as possible, seeking the support of all like-minded political leaders. Positive efforts were made to seek a consensus on constitutional reforms.

C.R. Das's presidential address at the Gaya Congress session of 1922 was the first clear indication of the thinking of the Congress on constitutional changes in the changed political context of the country. He emphasized the importance of evolving a 'detailed scheme of Government' laying down the principle that 'no system of Government which is not for the people and by the people can ever be regarded as the true foundation of Swaraj'. Elaborating his view further, he observed that 'the foundation of real democracy must be laid in small centres'. Emphasis on people's participation in the process of administration, gradual decentralization and a minimum role for bureaucracy were the fundamentals of the new pattern of government which he had in view and which he stressed later as well. His effort was to establish a link between the role of the people in the struggle for freedom as well as in framing any structure of government. He put forward his views in the following words: 'Our demand for Swaraj must now be presented in a more practical shape. The Congress should frame a clear scheme of what we mean by a system of Government which may serve as a real foundation for Swaraj.'²³

So far no concrete scheme of a democratic constitution had been prepared by any political organization. It was C.R. Das who drafted the Swaraj Scheme for the consideration of the Swaraj Party and other public bodies. As this was the first attempt of its kind, and as similar attempts were made by other nationalist leaders in the following years, it would be appropriate to go through the scheme in some detail.

While issuing the Swaraj Scheme on 30 January 1923, C.R. Das advocated the 'need for stating the fundamental principles and formulating the broad outlines of a scheme of self-government which should form the basis of Indian Swaraj'. He desired, from the very beginning, that like-minded persons and groups should offer both suggestions and criticisms on the basis of which the scheme was to be suitably modified. He reminded everyone: 'The outline represents the ideal which should be kept in view, as one to be gradually worked up to, and that a certain number of intermediate and progressive steps have to intervene, but which must all definitely, unmistakably, steadily and progressively help to change the present regime so as to realise that ideal at no distant time.'²⁴

The Swaraj Scheme formulated local autonomy as a fundamental principle. It favoured genuine decentralization of administration,

substantial distribution of power and real responsibility of the public servant to the representatives of the people. It followed some of the principles that were honoured in India from time immemorial. The Scheme mentioned, among other proposals, the following:

To form a scheme of Government regard must be had (1) to the formation of local centres more or less on the lines of the ancient village systems of India; (2) to the growth of larger and larger groups out of the integration of these village centres; (3) the unifying state should be the result of similar growth; (4) the village centres and the larger groups must be practically autonomous; (5) the residuary powers of control must remain in the Central Government.

Thus the Swaraj Scheme underlined the importance of the Village Panchayats, District Panchayats, the Provincial Panchayats and, at the apex, the All-India Panchayat. The idea was that the administration in India must be broad-based and the ancient village panchayat system must be revived and given new form. The scheme clearly laid down the separate functions of all these bodies. The underlying purpose was maximum local elective autonomy and minimum centralization. Considerable attention was paid to the qualifications and role of the legislator. The Swaraj Scheme stressed that the legislator 'should stand in the position of a Trustee and Elder to the people' and laid down that the 'legislator should not receive any cash remuneration for his work from the public funds. Such cash payment, while perfectly right and even necessary in other fields of work, taints the peculiar fiduciary status of the legislator.' From this it becomes evident that the framers of the Swaraj Scheme desired that, in the proposed democratic form of government, the legislator would have 'venerable dignity' and enjoy 'trust, honour and reverence' in society.²⁵

The idea of 'spiritualising politics by changing the whole culture and civilization of society from its mercenary to missionary basis' was uppermost in the minds of the framers of the Swaraj Scheme and their entire effort was to remodel the constitutional system.

Similar attempts were made, some time later, to evolve and prepare a democratic constitution. An All Parties Conference appointed a committee consisting of leaders of all shades of opinion in November 1924 for this purpose. Explaining the aims of the conference, Gandhi said that it was necessary to consider the best way of reuniting all political parties in an effort to prepare a scheme of swaraj. The All Parties Conference met again in January 1925, discussed various issues, and decided to appoint a sub-committee which divided itself into two groups — one to deal with the communal question and the other to outline a scheme of swaraj. The consideration of the Swaraj Scheme could not make much

headway as different communal groups failed to arrive at any agreed proposals. It was felt that without the basis of communal unity it would be infructuous to adopt any constitutional proposals.

During these years Annie Besant also attempted to help evolve an acceptable scheme. She organized a National Convention consisting of members and ex-members of the Legislative Assembly and Provincial Councils, and members of the Council of the National Home Rule League. The National Convention discussed various proposals on constitutional reforms which were incorporated in the Commonwealth of India Bill. Her efforts were directed not only in India but in Britain as well. Annie Besant proceeded to Britain and consulted some of the leading members of the Labour Party. It was because of her efforts that the Labour leader, George Lansbury, submitted a bill in the House of Commons in December 1925. The bill could not proceed beyond the first reading, even so it remained a source of information for others.

A draft bill, entitled 'Swarajya (Self Government) for India Bill' was published in Britain in June 1927. It was the outcome of the report of the Indian Advisory Committee of the Independent Labour Party which was accepted in its annual session of 1926. The memorandum of the bill explained that it had been drafted 'with a view to formulating a constitution for India whose terms should, as far as possible, reconcile with the views of progressive Indian political opinion'. It further pointed out that the 'principles of democracy, self-government and freedom' were accepted as fundamental in this undertaking. It frankly admitted that the Besant Bill had been taken as the foundation for the bill. The important clause of the bill regarding the object in view read as follows:

India will have the same constitutional status in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and Irish Free State with a Parliament having powers to make laws for peace, order and good government of India and an Executive responsible to that Parliament and shall be styled as the Commonwealth of India.²⁶

All these efforts encouraged the Congress to engage itself in the process far more seriously than it had done earlier. The basic approach of the Congress was that the constitution framed by Indians must be an agreed constitution — agreed to by all political parties and communities. This was reflected in the following resolution adopted by the AICC in May 1927:

Having regard to the general desire of all political parties in the country to unite together in settling a Swaraj Constitution and having considered the various drafts submitted to it, this Congress authorises the Working

Committee to confer with similar committees to be appointed by other organisations in the country to draft a Swaraj Constitution for India on the basis of a Declaration of Rights and place the same for consideration and approval before a Special Convention to be convened in Delhi not later than March, consisting of the All India Congress Committee and leaders and representatives of the other organisations and the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures.²⁷

From this it is obvious that the Congress accepted the need of drafting a Swaraj Constitution in accordance with the 'general desire' of all the important political parties in the country. It decided to take the initiative after certain organizations and leaders had come forward with a draft constitution both in India and Britain. An agreed constitution meant a document approved by the Muslim League and other parties as well. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, the Congress President of the 1926 session, expressed his views not only in the presidential address but in a separate publication in the following year. Voicing the opinion of Congressmen he remarked:

This decision to frame a constitution for Free India hardly requires justification. On the one hand there are no prospects of a settlement with the British Government. On the other the fight for Swaraj will gain greater momentum and weight when it is backed by a Swaraj Constitution either clearly and fully outlined or worked out to its last detail. If the Indian National Congress can adopt a constitution to which the country as a whole will agree, we shall be able to consolidate opinion and accumulate pressure against Government.

Significantly enough, the Congress thinking was that the nationalist struggle would gain momentum with the acceptance of a defined constitution. The Congress proposals were far more forthright and radical than the other suggestions discussed earlier. In the first place, the Congress was not prepared to surrender the right of self-determination. The Congress was firm in its view that it would not submit any constitution, prepared under its direction, in the form of a bill to be introduced in the British Parliament. This was contrary to the stand taken by Annie Besant who had sought the support of British politicians in placing the bill before the House of Commons. What the Congress insisted was that 'The constitution must be ours and they can come to a settlement with us on its basis by persuading us to agree to this or that alteration.' In the second place, the Congress thought, in 1927, that 'the constitution need not necessarily be framed on the lines of fullest national independence' and was prepared to content itself with full dominion status. This remained the view of a large section of Congressmen till the Lahore Congress session (1929). The third suggestion was that 'we must proceed

to frame it on the model of the constitution of western democracies'. The fourth suggestion was that instead of proposing a modified version of the Government of India Act, the Congress should determine its own constitution and the Act of 1919 could not serve as a model for a constitution giving full expression to Dominion Status. Another suggestion put forward during the year was to establish a 'federal democracy'.²⁸

6. Drafting the Nehru Report

With the announcement of the appointment of the Statutory Commission, known commonly as the Simon Commission, in November 1927, the issue of the future constitutional set-up of the country gained prominence. The speeches delivered at the Madras Congress session of 1927 were very sharp and critical, indicating that the mood of a large section of Congressmen was changing. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, C.N.M. Mudaliar, in his introductory remarks, condemned the non-responsive policy of the Government of India. Referring to the denial of the right of self-determination by the Act of 1919 he observed: 'India was insulted. This was a great betrayal and treachery which the united voice of India has been relentlessly condemning.' With regard to the Statutory Commission, Mudaliar's opinion was: 'To acquiesce in the reassertion of that pernicious doctrine now applied in the appointment of an All-British Commission, would be to abandon our self-respect.' Presiding over the session, M.A. Ansari reminded the delegates that the need for a constitution sponsored by Indians had been felt for a long time. He argued that the task of 'framing a constitution for a people consisting of 320 million souls, professing different religions and speaking different languages will be the most unique and gigantic experiment in democracy ever attempted,'²⁹ and cautioned everyone that it would be a challenging venture. The AICC called upon the Congress Working Committee to frame a Swaraj Constitution in consultation with the elected members of the legislatures and other leaders of political parties.

In pursuance of this decision, invitations were issued to more than 24 political organizations and groups whose representatives met at the All Parties Conference in Delhi in February 1928. Those who attended the Conference included M.M. Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, M.A. Ansari, Mohamed Ali, T.B. Sapru, M.A. Jinnah, B.S. Moonje, Hasrat Mohani, H.N. Kunzru and the Raja of Mahmudabad. There were two formidable difficulties in the way of complete or even substantial unanimity. The first arose from the differences in the general outlook of the Congress and that of the other political organizations, the former having at its last session adopted a resolution declaring independence as its goal, and the latter aiming at dominion status; the second from the widely differing angles of vision from which the various communal organizations viewed

their political rights. There was considerable discussion on the communal issues and it was found that the representatives of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha differed on the reservation of seats and the separation of Sind.

It would be well to explain the assessment of the situation made by Motilal Nehru at the time he was called upon to preside over the committee. In a letter to Gandhi he referred to the central role which the Congress had to play in framing a constitution. Motilal Nehru wrote:

It does not matter to me whether or not the All Parties Conference is a success though I have taken all possible steps to have as representative a meeting as is possible. What does matter is the decision of the Working Committee of the Congress. If the Working Committee arrives at some decision we shall have something substantial to work upon and will not mind very much whether the All Parties Conference is a success or not. It is quite clear to me that whatever action is to be taken in the country it must be guided and regulated by the Congress.³⁰

Even though Gandhi was not directly interested in the All Parties Conference he went to Bombay at the request of Motilal Nehru and it was at Gandhi's suggestion that a committee was formed. From its very inception through the various stages of the discussions of the Nehru Committee Gandhi always stood by Motilal Nehru.

When the All Parties Conference met again in May 1928 the situation was not a promising one. The communal organizations had drifted further apart and each of them had hardened in its attitude and was not prepared to change or modify it. As there was no likelihood of an agreed or satisfactory solution at that stage it was decided to appoint a small committee to consider and determine the principles of the constitution. Besides Motilal Nehru who was its chairman, the committee had nine members representing all interests. Ali Imam and Shuaib Qureshi were to represent the Muslim point of view; M.S. Aney and M.R. Jayakar the Hindu Mahasabha; G.R. Pradhan reflected the non-Brahmin view; Sardar Mangal Singh gave the viewpoint of the Sikh League; T.B. Saprú represented the Liberals and N.M. Joshi was asked to represent the interest of labour. As it turned out, even these members did not combine well in the formulation of the scheme. Many were the difficulties confronting the committee. But for Motilal Nehru this task could not have been accomplished. It was due to his unbounded enthusiasm and energy that a scheme for a constitution was prepared. The report, published on 21 August 1928, came to be known as the Nehru Report. Tej Bahadur Saprú, the great Liberal leader and an expert in constitutional law, helped Motilal Nehru all along.

The constitution which the Nehru Report put forward was a most

exhaustive document, complete in itself, and as such it covered a wide range of constitutional issues. It began with a statement on the constitutional status of India. It held that the constitution should be based on full responsible government on the model of the self-governing dominions, making it clear that the attainment of Dominion Status was not viewed 'as a remote stage of our evolution but as the next immediate step'. Both at the Centre and in the provinces the executive was to be under the complete control of the popularly elected legislature equipped with full and plenary powers.

As regards the vexed question of communal representation the report was the boldest attempt made till then by the Indian political leaders to face squarely the difficulties of communalism. The report recognized the fact that communal dissensions cast their shadow over all political work. But it expressed confidence that the problem would be easy to solve in a free India, unhampered by alien authority and intervention. It further stressed the need of giving a feeling of security to the minorities by means of safeguards and guarantees and cultural autonomy. Turning its back on the agreement embodied in the Lucknow Pact, the Committee rejected separate electorates since, in its view, they had served their original purpose by paving the way to a better understanding between the two communities. It recommended reservation of seats for Muslims in the central legislature and in the legislatures of Hindu-majority provinces but firmly turned down the principle of weightage. The committee did not favour the reservation of Muslim seats in proportion to population in the legislatures of Bengal and Punjab. On this point it was of the opinion that since Muslims were in a majority in these provinces they needed no reservation there and that, in fact, these two provinces offered an ideal arena for an experiment in pure, democratic electorates. Thus joint electorates without any reservation to any community could operate in these two provinces. This was justified by the fact that the constitution framed by the committee postulated elections based on adult franchise. The committee accepted one of the major demands of the Muslims by recommending that the North-West Frontier Province should have the same constitutional status as other provinces and Sind should be converted into a province separate from Bombay Presidency.

The democratic character of the constitution was emphasized all through on the principle that 'all powers of government and all authority, legislative, executive and judicial are derived from the people'.³¹ It provided for adult franchise. The fundamental rights, as provided in the report, were, considering the circumstances under which they were framed, commendably comprehensive.

The constitution, as chalked out in the report, was a compromise between the federal and unitary forms of governments. The committee

was inspired by a desire to create a strong and stable constitutional system which, in view of the country's history and the known existence of divisive forces, should be capable of maintaining national unity and power. Such a constitution could provide an ample measure of autonomy to the provinces, safeguard the interests of the Muslims and other minorities and lift the country out of the slough of poverty and underdevelopment. It embodied a scheme of distributing powers between the Centre and the provinces but reserved residuary powers to the former. It, however, did emphasize the need of autonomy for the provinces.

The foregoing must make it abundantly clear that the importance of the Nehru Report is inestimable as a constitutional document. Its significance can be realized only when we closely examine its important recommendations and compare them with the provisions contained in the Government of India Act, 1935, and the present constitution of the Indian Republic.

Soon after the publication of the report, Motilal Nehru reminded the Hindu Mahasabha leader, M.S. Aney, that 'it certainly is the last effort to combine all parties in a joint national front'.³² As the chairman of the committee he remained in constant touch with various political leaders, sought their support for the constitutional scheme and continuously engaged himself in winning them over. But the Muslim leaders were opposed to some of the basic proposals of the report from the very beginning and their attitude hardened as the year rolled on. Ultimately, their rejection of the report dashed all hopes of a common political programme for major Indian political parties.

7. Dominion Status versus Complete Independence

Motilal Nehru had been obliged to make Dominion Status the pivot of his constitutional scheme. To a section of Congressmen this was an unacceptable retreat from the resolution demanding complete independence proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru and passed without opposition in the 1927 session. The Independence of India League, directed by the younger Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar, denounced the report and campaigned for complete independence as the objective of the Congress. When the Congress met at Calcutta at the close of the year, Mahatma Gandhi's intervention was sought. He mediated between the Nehrus, father and son, between the older generation of nationalists who wanted a constitutional settlement and the new generation who were impatient for freedom and for a confrontation with the raj. Through the efforts of the Mahatma, a compromise was reached; if within one year the British did not grant dominion status to India the Congress would launch civil disobedience to wrest complete independence.

Whatever other dissensions the committee's report had caused, the British authorities could no longer close their eyes to the fact that a near unanimity had developed in India on the demand for the extension of responsible government at the Centre. Hopes rose high in India when, as a result of the general election held in May 1929, Ramsay MacDonald was installed as the Prime Minister of Great Britain at the head of a Labour Government which included W. Benn, known for long as a great friend of the Congress, as Secretary of State for India. By way of response to the ultimatum of the Congress of December 1928 came a statement issued by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on 31 October 1929, declaring that he had been authorized by His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it was implicit in the Declaration of August 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of 'Dominion Status'. The viceroy also announced a change in the procedure regarding the Simon Commission and suggested a Round Table Conference of representatives of different parties and interests in India and representatives of the Indian States on the problem of constitutional reforms after the publication of the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote later that this 'ingeniously worded announcement' was made to check the 'onward march of destiny' towards the ideal of independence.³³ Even though the viceroy's statement was vague and non-committal and despite the indication that the Indian princes were to be brought into the proposed conference as a reactionary dead-weight to complicate India's progress to self-government, the Congress leaders, prominent Liberals, and those belonging to other parties and groups, agreed to hold a conference and decide the future course of action. In a manifesto issued at Delhi on 2 November, these leaders thanked the viceroy and expressed the hope that the Round Table Conference would meet not to discuss 'when Dominion Status was to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India'.³⁴ At the same time it demanded that certain acts should be done so as to inspire trust in the country. As it stood the Manifesto was evidently acceptable to Gandhi who emphasized that he was 'dying to give and secure true heart co-operation'.³⁵

There can now be little doubt that the resentment expressed by the younger and more radical element of the Congress brought about a change in the approach of the senior leaders. Subhas Chandra Bose was the first to be up in arms. He not only refused ostentatiously to sign the Manifesto but also published a condemnation of it. He lost no time in submitting his resignation from the Congress Working Committee. Jawaharlal Nehru was equally unhappy. Writing two days after the Delhi meeting he informed Gandhi that 'we differ fundamentally on that issue and I am not likely to convert you'. Referring to his nomination as

president of the next Congress session, he added, 'In any event it is quite clear to me that my position in the Congress will become more and more difficult. I accepted the presidentship of the Congress with great misgivings but in the hope that we shall fight on a clear issue next year. That issue is already clouded and the only reason for my acceptance has gone.'³⁶ The ideal of independence was inspiring the younger Nehru to stand his ground. His response to the Delhi Manifesto was, this time quite unprecedented for he was not only prepared to decline the presidentship of the Congress but he also tendered his resignation from the post of General Secretary of the Congress. Both Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, realizing the dangers of alienating the younger section of the Congress, modified their strategy and lost no time in mollifying the two young leaders.

This was reflected in the decision of the Congress Working Committee which announced in mid-November that it was prepared to confirm the Delhi Manifesto up to the holding of the forthcoming Congress. A week later, J.M. Sen Gupta wrote a letter to Motilal Nehru from Calcutta which went straight to the heart of the matter:

The biggest of all questions today to my mind is how to preserve the unity and solidarity of the Congress. If the Congress splits up everything goes. What might remain would not even be a shadow of the present Congress. . . . In order that the older leaders may be in a position to continue to guide and assist the younger men it is absolutely necessary to give effect to the Calcutta resolution at Lahore.³⁷

By early December 1929 this had become very precisely Gandhi's view also. By this time, moreover, Jawaharlal had spoken vigorously against a settlement with the British in his presidential address to the Nagpur meeting of the Indian Trade Union Congress. It was in this changed political atmosphere that the meeting between the viceroy and five Indian leaders took place on 23 December 1929. Not unexpectedly, the meeting ended on a distinctly negative note since the viceroy was not willing to give an assurance that dominion status would form the basis of the deliberations of the proposed Round Table Conference and the Congress representatives, Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, maintained that it was pointless to carry on discussion unless such an assurance was given. The Congress assembled at Lahore towards the end of December 1929, with Jawaharlal Nehru as president, and decided 'to devote exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India'. It further said that nothing was to be gained by the Congress participation in the proposed Round Table Conference.³⁸

8. The Congress and the Round Table Conference

In the wake of the rising nationalist tempo during the Civil Disobedience

Movement, preparations were initiated to hold a Round Table Conference in London. In May 1930, the viceroy announced that steps were being taken to hold such a conference in October. The crucial question at that time was whether the Congress leaders would agree to take part in these deliberations in the changed political situation.

The Liberal leaders, T.B. Saprú and M.R. Jayakar, lost no time in reminding the viceroy that 'taking a long view of the situation it would be most unfortunate if no attempt was made at this stage to secure the presence of the Congress representatives at the Round Table Conference'. They further asked him 'to bear in mind the aftermath of the Conference and the possible attitude of the Congressmen and the people at large towards any constitution which may be enacted without their participation'.³⁹ The Liberal leaders offered to play the role of intermediaries between the Government of India and the Congress and, in this regard, sought the permission of the viceroy to meet Gandhi and the Nehrus, then lodged separately in Yeravada and Naini Central Jails, to secure the participation of the Congress in the London Conference. The viceroy consented and informed Saprú and Jayakar that he was 'no less anxious to explore every possibility of finding an agreed solution of the constitutional problem.'⁴⁰

The Saprú-Jayakar negotiations opened on 23 July with their meeting with Gandhi in the Yeravada Jail. He gave them a note for the Nehrus in Naini Jail which indicated support for Congress participation 'if the Round Table Conference is restricted to a discussion of the safeguards that may be necessary in connection with full self-government during the period of transition'. Here certainly was a softer approach than Gandhi had taken at Lahore or in the interview with Irwin on 23 December 1929. But Gandhi's letter also contained the rider that 'Jawaharlal's must be the final voice'.⁴¹ This indicated that the memory of the stand taken by the latter after the Delhi Manifesto was still fresh in the mind of Gandhi and he was not prepared to take any decision on his own. When Jayakar and Saprú reached Naini Jail and interviewed the Nehrus on 27 July they got a tough reception. The Nehrus had outlined their approach even before the meeting and were firm that the conference was unlikely to achieve anything unless all vital matters could be tied up in advance. Jawaharlal recorded later: 'We talked and argued in a circle, hardly understanding each other's language or thought, so great was the difference in political outlook. It was obvious to us that there was not the faintest chance of any peace between the Congress and the Government as matters stood.'⁴² The Nehrus felt unable to suggest terms without consulting Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee. Arrangements were, therefore, made for their journey to Yeravada for the final round of negotiations between the Nehrus, Gandhi, some of

the prominent members of the Working Committee and the intermediaries. The result of this conference was embodied in a letter signed by Gandhi, the Nehrus, Syed Mahmud, Jairamdas Daulatram and Mrs Sarojini Naidu in which they asked the government to concede the following points: (1) India's right to secede from the empire at will, (2) India's right to submit to an impartial scrutiny the so-called public debt of India.

When the mediators submitted the Congress proposals to the viceroy, his response was least encouraging. The viceroy considered even a discussion of the preliminaries as impossible. This indicated that the government had no desire to examine the Congress proposals in depth. The whole object was not to relax pressure on the Congress. The viceroy permitted a spate of ordinances to counter the Civil Disobedience Movement. By the close of August 1930 the negotiations had failed. The Congress kept away from the first session of the Round Table Conference.

The first Round Table Conference opened on 12 November 1930 and its sessions continued for more than two months. The conference was composed of nominated members, most of whom could be relied upon to play the British game. It was attended by 89 members; 16 from the three British political parties, 16 from the Indian States, and 57 from the various sections and groups of India. But without the Congress the conference was an empty pageant, a tamasha of reactionaries dancing to British fiddling, a 'marriage without the bridegroom'.⁴³ The strength of the Congress and its title to speak for a vast majority of the Indian people was stated and endorsed by speaker after speaker in the course of discussions in the conference. C.Y. Chintamani deplored the British system of administration 'which can be maintained only by casting into jail such noble beings as Mahatma Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya is a doomed system'. Srinivasa Sastri assured the Conference that the Congress leaders 'are our kinsmen both in spirit and blood. It is a sense of political grievance that has placed them in this position. Remove that discontent and you will find them alongside you.'⁴⁴

The significance of the Conference lay in the fact that three central ideas emerged in it, namely Indian federation, responsibility at the centre, and the involvement of the Indian Princes in the framing of the constitutional scheme. The idea of a federation was mooted here for the first time. Before the conference met the Government of India and the Statutory Commission had indicated that the creation of a federation was a remote idea. The virtually unanimous approval which the proposal of an all-India federation received from the very beginning of the conference came as a surprise to the British policy-makers. References to dominion status were a formal homage to a political principle to which

most Indian political parties and groups were committed. It was apparent, however, that any insistence on making dominion status a basis for discussion would have created a deadlock at the very outset of the Conference. As a result, while the phrase, dominion status, continued to be repeated, real emphasis was on responsible government which, in any case, had been officially described as leading inevitably to dominion status. It has been argued that the Congress decision of keeping away from the first session helped the minorities and other sections to entrench themselves in guarded positions. While it would have been possible to come to some understanding with them in the first session, the task had become far more difficult by the time the second session began.

No sooner was the First Round Table Conference over on 19 January 1931, the viceroy initiated measures to open a dialogue with the Congress. He ordered the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee, issued a statement withdrawing the ban on its meetings and impressed upon the provincial governors the need of creating a peaceful atmosphere. The correspondence of the viceroy makes it clear that he recognized that everything depended on the attitude of the Congress. Writing to the Secretary of State he gave the following account of the political situation: 'If Congress were to decide to co-operate on acceptable conditions the position would be made easier in several directions. But present indications are unfavourable and if Congress decides to carry on civil disobedience movement we may be faced with a situation of great difficulty and even danger.'⁴⁵ He voiced similar feelings in a letter to the UP Governor: 'We are passing through a difficult time here. The omens of the Congress coming in are not very good. Jawaharlal rejoices in revolution and the best that I can foresee is that there should be a split in the Congress. . . . Much no doubt will depend on Gandhi.'⁴⁶ Obviously, the viceroy was exploring avenues to peace which he tried to prepare after the close of the first session of the Round Table Conference. If the viceroy lacked any real optimism about the response of the Congress leaders it was because of his earlier experience of carrying on dialogue with them.

The Liberal leaders again played an important role in toning down the anger of the Radical Congress leaders who were not in favour of opening any negotiations with the government. Sapru, Jayakar and Sastri sent a cable from London asking the Working Committee to postpone any decision on the constitutional advance until their arrival in the country. This had its effect on the Working Committee which postponed the publication of a strongly worded resolution passed on 21 January 1931. The Liberals who landed in Bombay on 6 February hastened to get in touch with Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee.

They had long talks with Gandhi and other leaders on the recent London Conference and were able to remove some of their misgivings.

The upshot of these discussions was Gandhi's decision to seek an interview with the viceroy who was perhaps waiting for such a call as, in response to Gandhi's letter of 14 February, the viceroy decided to convey his consent by telegram on the 16th. Gandhi left for Delhi on the same day to open 'the very delicate conversations' which continued up to 5 March, ultimately leading to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. According to this pact, the Congress agreed to 'discontinue' the Civil Disobedience Movement and take part in the second session of the Round Table Conference. It was announced that further discussions on the scheme of constitutional reform would take place on the basis of the statement made by the British Prime Minister in January 1931.

Gandhi's statement to the press, issued on the same day, provides the key for understanding the motive of the chief Congress figure who not only signed the provisional settlement, as it was then described, but was also the focus of attention for the rest of the year. Gandhi had the following to say at the time he signed the settlement: 'Suffering has its well defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise and when the limit is reached, to prolong it would not be unwise but the height of folly. It would be folly to go on suffering when the opponent makes it easy for you to enter into a discussion.' Even though his opinion was that the settlement had 'made a real opening',⁴⁷ he had no illusions about the pact and did not expect much from it.

The settlement was the main point of discussion in the Karachi session of the Congress held in the last week of March. The debate on the Congress decision to participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference was prolonged and even acrimonious. The younger group was highly critical of the settlement. Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose disapproved of the pact and they were supported by various other leaders. But they did not carry the struggle beyond voicing their opposition. It was, however, Gandhi's responsibility to explain the decision in the open session and he did his best to win over the radicals. He said his object was to convert his opponent by love. The stage of negotiations, according to him, had arrived when the Working Committee was released and the viceroy appealed for the discontinuance of the struggle. But he did not think that he would return with swaraj in his pocket. That would be no humiliation either. It was better to return disappointed rather than pass ignored. He would be able to assert India's claim for independence and acquaint the British public with her political aspirations. The Karachi session was the 'pinnacle of the Mahatma's popularity and prestige'.⁴⁸

A few weeks later the Working Committee decided to appoint Gandhi as the sole delegate of the Congress, thus rejecting the government's offer to accommodate up to twenty Congress representatives in the Conference. It was explained that this was to ensure that the Congress spoke with one voice in the Conference. Gandhi voiced a similar opinion in a statement saying that 'the idea behind it was that what was to be presented was not several points of view but only the Congress'.^{49a} However, as later events indicated, this did not strengthen Gandhi's hands. The Congress approach was also not in tune with the realities. The idea that 'Gandhi was going to London not to hammer out the details of a constitution but to negotiate the fundamentals of a treaty'^{49b} did not impress the British authorities. The better course would have been to secure a composite team acting under Gandhi's leadership.

Gandhi's visit to Britain, stretching over a period of almost three months, helped the Congress to put forward its national demand before the Second Round Table Conference as well as before the different sections of British society. At the very outset Gandhi explained that he had undertaken the journey 'absolutely in the spirit of co-operation and to strive, to my utmost, to find points of agreement'.⁵⁰ His first speech at the conference was impressive. He gave a brief history of the Congress, its composition, its methods and its objects. He pointed out the differences between the Congress, the government and other parties. He said the Congress stood for central responsibility, Indian federation and safeguards in her interest. He added that the British Prime Minister's statement fell short of Indian expectations. The Congress did not want a mere political constitution but a scheme of partnership between the two equal nations. He accused the authorities of unduly fanning the communal question, to settle which, he said, they should not have come all these six thousand miles as it could have been settled in India itself. Gandhi stressed time and again that the main question was of constitution-making and not of communal settlement. He declared that he was not interested in a scheme for merely sharing power with the bureaucracy but he was out to get responsible government and the Congress was willing to go into the wilderness for an indefinite period to achieve this end.

In spite of all this, the Conference moved along its earlier defined lines. Gandhi was swamped by the minority spokesmen, mainly yes-men of British politicians. They were willing to come to terms with the British on the basis of separate electorates which they thought gave them an advantage. In this stage-managed and manipulated conference Gandhi could not make any headway. The 'long, slow agony' of the conference, as Gandhi described it, ended on 1 December 1931. Apparently his mission to London had failed.

The third session of the Round Table Conference opened in the middle of November 1932 and concluded a few days before the year closed. It was the smallest, the shortest and, in its composition, the most conservative of the three sessions which was neither attended by the British Labour Party nor by the Congress. As a result, the third conference was held under the complete domination of the reactionary elements. The conference was concerned mainly with reaffirming the decisions already arrived at in regard to the outlines of the new constitution and filling in some of the details.

The Round Table Conference experiment in constitution making came to an end in December 1932 though its original spirit had ended a year earlier. Thereafter, the British government decided to follow the procedure of the preparation of an official scheme. A White Paper outlining British proposals for constitutional reform was published in March 1933. These proposals produced widespread dismay in India.

9. The Congress and the Act of 1935

The policy of the Congress towards the reform proposals was enunciated in June 1934 when the Working Committee passed a resolution on the White Paper. The resolution stated that the White Paper did not express the will of the people and had been condemned by all Indian political parties and fell short of the Congress goal, if it did not actually retard progress towards it. It stated that the only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper was a constitution drawn up by a constituent assembly. In the regular Congress session, held in October 1934, the White Paper scheme was strongly opposed. In the presidential address, Rajendra Prasad voiced the resentment of the Congress in his elaborate criticism of the White Paper proposals. He impressed upon everyone not to expect anything from the pronouncements of the government, saying: 'It has dragged on in some form or other its interminable investigations for six or seven long years. It is yet to be seen if this long labour is going to produce anything acceptable even to the most moderate opinion in the country.' There was not much hope as the White Paper did not 'in any way fulfil the requirements of the Congress'. It was the negation of the demands voiced by the Congress and held no promise of 'even a gradual progress towards any of them'.

The Congress President criticized the White Paper proposals in the light of four tests. The first test applied by him was whether the proposed new legislatures would be representative of the nation. In this regard he found that the British proposals aimed at replacing the block of officials and non-officials nominated by the government by nominees of Indian States joining the proposed federation. This, coupled with the fact that the separate electorate system was not only to be retained but

considerably extended would have the effect of making the proposed new Assembly 'a less progressive and more autocratically inclined body than the present Assembly'. The second test was that the extent to which the executive authority would be responsible to popular chambers. Here again the proposed scheme did not promise anything substantial because both the governor general and the governors were armed with wide extraordinary powers defined as 'special responsibilities' or 'discretionary powers'. These powers were not only extensive in nature but all-pervading as well. With this analysis, the Congress President observed that 'the much advertised autonomy of the Provinces really gives more autonomy to the Governor than the people or the minister'. If this was the fear expressed in the sphere where the proposed scheme was to introduce some form of responsible government, it can easily be presumed that the disappointment of the Congress was very real. The third test was the financial control to be exercised by the new legislatures. As to the competence of the legislatures in this sphere, the view of the Congress President was that this made 'the illusory nature of the so-called reforms become still more apparent'. He calculated that more than 80 per cent of the central government would be outside the vote of the new assembly. Even for the remaining 20 per cent, the minister in the proposed popular set-up was not free to act; the result being that the 'control of the minister over the public purse would be nil in the centre'. Rajendra Prasad's fourth test was whether the new constitutional set-up contained within itself elements of growth and development. In this regard his view was that instead of any 'automatic growth' everything would continue to 'depend on the sweet will and pleasure of the British Parliament'. The blueprint of the proposed federation raised even more problems than envisaged earlier. Rajendra Prasad's opinion was that the federation, as proposed, had no parallel in history. He thought, 'It would be a kind of federation in which unabashed autocracy will sit entrenched in one-third of India and peep in every now and then to strangle popular will in the remaining two-thirds.'⁵¹

The Congress opposition to the reform proposals stemmed primarily from the fact it did not bring India any nearer the cherished goal of self-government. The Congress President had voiced his criticism at an appropriate time. The proposals for the new constitution were still under consideration by a top-level parliamentary committee which could have given due consideration to the objections raised by the Congress. But no such attempt was made. All the available evidence indicates that the committee turned a deaf ear to the opinions expressed by leading Congressmen and others. The White Paper was further examined not from the Indian point of view but from the British point of view. The

detailed review undertaken after the Round Table Conference ultimately turned out to be an exercise in futility as far as the Congress expectations were concerned. It was not surprising, under the circumstances, that the final scheme submitted to the British parliament in the form of a bill, on 19 December 1934, was a disappointing measure.

A short resume of the views, expressed on behalf of the Labour Party, during the discussions over the bill in the House of Commons, will help us to analyse its appreciation of the Congress stand on constitutional reform. We take up the speech of Clement Attlee who later played a key role in the transfer of power in India. On this occasion he moved a resolution that 'no legislation will be satisfactory which does not secure the goodwill and co-operation of the Indian people by recognising explicitly India's right to Dominion Status'. He warned the British Government that the Indian people were 'very sensitive on the question of status' and the non-inclusion of the ideal of dominion status in the bill was its most disappointing feature. His opinion was that the 'keynote of the bill is mistrust'. Another point he made was that there was no enthusiasm for the measure in the country. On the other hand there was 'as a matter of fact rejection by all the live movements in India, not only by Congress and the Liberals but by Labour and by many people classed as Moderates'. There was no hope that by mere 'acquiescence or by placid acceptance' the proposed reform Act would be acceptable to the Indians. Clement Attlee pointed out further that the Central Legislature was being 'overloaded with conservative interests, landlords, commerce and the like', which was an ample proof 'that the definite decision has been that India is to be ruled by the wealthy and the privileged'.⁵² Thus the bill was 'deliberately framed so as to exclude as far as possible the Congress party from effective power'.⁵³

Even though the Act of 1935 was passed in August, the Congress defined its stand towards it not before the next Congress session held in Lucknow in April 1936. In his presidential address, Jawaharlal Nehru described it as a 'retrograde measure', 'a new charter of slavery to strengthen the bonds of imperialist domination' and declared that 'to this Act our attitude can only be one of uncompromising hostility and a constant endeavour to end it'. His scathing attack was indicative of the fact that the Congress neither hoped for any fruitful constitutional advance nor looked forward to any further dialogue regarding constitutional change. Before the session came to a close, a strongly worded resolution was adopted expressing the opinion that the Act 'in no way represents the will of the nation', 'was designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India' and was imposed on the country to 'the accompaniment of widespread repression and the suppression of civil liberties'. It declared that no

constitution 'imposed by outside authority' was acceptable to it. It further reiterated and stressed that it would accept only a constitution adopted by 'a Constituent Assembly in the name of the Indian people'.⁵⁴

It should be observed, in conclusion, that as the years rolled on, the Congress began to lose faith in the desire and ability of the British Government to frame any worthwhile scheme of constitutional advance. This was largely due to the realization that there was very little chance of any real democratic constitution being accepted under the British aegis. The result was the insistence of the Congress on the summoning of a constituent assembly of representative Indians, with full authority to work out a constitution according to the needs and aspirations of the country.

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Chapter VII

The Indian National Congress and the Agrarian Question (1919-1935)

D.N. Panigrahi

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION was a dominant theme of the era of nationalist struggle and its ideology. It acquired enduring significance in the 1920s and 30s, and the problem of land reform, and the politics associated with it, continue to evoke considerable attention in contemporary India. The nature and the content of the problem, however, varied from time to time, depending upon the socio-economic compulsions generated by movements designed for redistribution of political power and social authority. While evaluating the role of the Indian National Congress in resolving the agrarian question in India, it is, therefore, essential to bear in mind the specific historical phase through which the Congress passed.

During 1919-35, two successive mass movements of epic proportions, peaceful and non-violent in character, were launched within a decade of each other under the banner of the Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi; the first being the Non-cooperation Movement between 1920 and 1922 followed by the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31. Mahatma Gandhi was able to forge a powerful anti-imperialist united front of Indian people comprising different classes and communities, which cut across the frontiers of caste, creed and religion. Yet it should be stressed that the major component of participants in the struggle for freedom was drawn from the peasantry. Before Gandhiji stormed the centre of the political stage in 1919, with his call for the Rowlatt Satyagraha, the Congress, by and large, was an elitist party comprising professional classes, the landed gentry of the liberal variety, and the upper and middle classes, who had benefited from western education, and were inspired by British liberalism. The arena of political activity also was confined to towns and cities. With the advent of Gandhi the entire situation was transformed. By 1920-21, as a consequence of the forces unleashed by the mass movement, the Indian National Congress itself was transformed into 'a mass organization', as pointed

out by Jawaharlal Nehru.¹ The movement, no doubt, continued to derive its intellectual sustenance, as well as its following, from regions of urban and rural unrest; nevertheless, a notable transformation in the political landscape had taken place. There was a distinct shift in political and social mobility; the shift was from town to the village, from the educated to the uneducated, from the upper classes to the educated middle classes and lower middle classes and to the peasantry, artisans and workers, which by itself was a revolution of great import.

The period between 1919 and 1935 also constitutes a most significant epoch from a different standpoint. It was during these years of stresses and strain that the basic formulations relating to socio-economic transformation, including the agrarian question, were debated and evolved. Several outstanding leaders of the Indian National Congress were, willy nilly, drawn into the controversy and heat which these issues generated, and contributed to the formulation of the Congress policy; yet the most distinguished roles in this realm were performed by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. While attempting a critical appreciation of the Congress ideology, policy and activity, it will be necessary to follow the evolution of ideas of these two great men of the 20th century, whose contribution is of paramount interest and had far-reaching consequences for the future of modern India.

Gandhi himself was conscious of the fact that no social or political change of any significance could be brought about unless the peasant and the village were intimately involved in the process of social transformation. His sympathy for the peasant, and the peasant's world-view, was most pronounced, right from the beginning. As early as 1916, Gandhiji attacked the aristocratic way of life. He said:

Whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say: 'Oh! it is the money that has come from the agriculturist.' Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists and they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away from them the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers nor the doctors nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.²

Mahatma Gandhi identified himself with the rural poor, and roused them to mass political action against British rule in India; yet his exploration of rural India was of recent origin. He returned from South Africa in 1915 after more than 20 years of struggle against the racial policies of the South African government. For a year, following Gokhale's advice, he travelled across the country barefoot to acquaint himself with the Indian

problems. In 1917, however, Gandhi heralded his entry into Indian politics by using the technique of satyagraha developed in South Africa. He went to Champaran, an indigo-producing district of Bihar, to enquire into grievances of the ryots, who, it was alleged, had been subjected to great oppression by the indigo planters, most of whom were Europeans. The story of this remarkable event, which eventually brought to an end the century-old exploitative relationship subsisting between the ryots and the indigo planters, has been told by Rajendra Prasad in *Mahatma Gandhi and Bihar* and *Satyagraha in Champaran*. Also, D.G. Tendulkar, the author of the eight-volume biography, *The Mahatma*, has written about it in his *Gandhi in Champaran*. The earliest literary creation depicting the moving tales of exploitation and oppression of the indigo cultivators of Bengal is to be found in *Nil Durpan*, a Bengali drama written in 1860 by Dinabandhu Mitra and translated into English by the famous poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

Gandhi went to Champaran, defying government orders not to enter the region, along with a band of young dedicated workers, including Raj Kumar Shukla, Rajendra Prasad, J.B. Kripalani, Brij Kishore Prasad and others. He moved from village to village recording the grievances of the ryots and tenants. About 25,000 cultivators gave evidence before Gandhi and his committee, Gandhi himself recording the statements of nearly 8,000 tenants and ryots. Thus, he came face to face with the Indian peasantry and was shocked to learn of the plight of the Champaran ryots who were subjected not only to illegal exactions, but were also meted out inhuman treatment if they refused to submit to the demands of the planters. Acts of violence, leading to torture and death were of common occurrence. The planters were seldom punished for these offences.

Equally abhorrent was the practice of forcing the cultivators to cultivate indigo for 20 to 30 years at fixed rates. This was the hated *tinkathia* system. Also, wherever villages were held by the indigo planters as zamindars, the tenants were forced to cultivate indigo after executing a contract to pay enhanced rents.

The plight of the ryots became more pitiable after 1900, when synthetic dyes were discovered in Germany, thus making the cultivation of natural indigo dye totally unremunerative. The outbreak of the First World War stopped the supply of synthetic dyes from Europe, giving some incentive to the cultivation of indigo, but the profits went to the planters and the ryots continued to suffer. Gandhi, therefore, took up their cause and appealed to the viceroy and the Government of Bihar to redress the grievances of the ryots. In 1917, the government, in response to Gandhi's appeal and to save itself from further embarrassment, appointed the Champaran Agrarian Enquiry Committee to go into the

question and requested Gandhi to serve as one of its members. As a result of the findings of the committee, the Government of Bihar abolished the *tinkathia* system, declaring it illegal. Also, exactions of any kind were prohibited and the planters agreed to subject themselves to the laws of the land. Owing to the spectacular success achieved by Gandhi in Champaran he was hailed as the liberator of the ryots.

The most articulate expression, however, of the dimensions of the agrarian problem and its solution was provided by Jawaharlal Nehru. Later, when he became the first Prime Minister of independent India as a representative of the ruling party, the Indian National Congress, he sought to solve the agrarian problem by laying the foundation of an egalitarian society in which the right of property in land was vested in the cultivating peasantry, which has emerged as a dominant force in the countryside today. The social transformation was achieved through the abolition of the zamindari system as a consequence of which the feudal classes, the landed gentry, were swept off from the position of pre-eminence which they had enjoyed under British rule.

The architect of the policy, which brought about this change in the political, social and economic landscape of rural India, was no doubt Jawaharlal Nehru. His task, however, was by no means easy. He had to carry the Indian National Congress with him, which, by any standards, was not a monolithic party. In it, several shades of opinion coalesced and clashed; powerful factions, with right and left leanings, dominated the Indian National Congress for several decades, both before and after independence. It is, therefore, not surprising that some ambivalence is to be found in the policy formulations and the principles underlying them as well as in the implementation of these principles and policies. The fact, however, remains that it was under Nehru's inspiration and guidance that the largest body of agrarian legislation was passed after 1947 by different states of the Indian Union, land reform being a state subject. So far as the introduction of radical changes in the rural class relations is concerned, this was effected with the abolition of zamindari and placing of a ceiling on land. What is equally significant is that Nehru laid the foundation of a modern industrial society, democratic in spirit, socialist in its aspirations, and scientific in its temper.

Following the example set by Jawaharlal Nehru, tremendous advances were made in several spheres in the later years, after Nehru's death, under Congress governments which brought about a rural transformation, ushering in a green revolution which has made India self-reliant in food production. The significance of this transformation can be properly understood if one realizes that between 1901 and 1944, according to one estimate, more than thirty million people perished owing to chronic famine conditions in India.³

Several facets of the agrarian question as perceived by the Indian National Congress during a period of intense political struggle are underlined in this paper. It is argued, first and foremost, that the agrarian problem could only be resolved when India had the freedom to shape its destiny, and secondly, that the question was tied up with the national economic policy, as formulated by the Indian National Congress after the achievement of independence. Nevertheless, the main thrusts of the agrarian policy, which were later adopted, were broadly defined between 1919 and 1935. The essential feature of this policy was to remove the landed classes from the position of dominance. Such a dominance of one class over another was recognized to be a hindrance to the prosperity of the peasantry. Secondly, it was generally agreed that unlimited ownership rights should be granted to the entire community of peasant classes, who were known as peasant proprietors, as well as tenants of various denominations. In 1920-21, the most pressing problem faced by the peasantry related to the removal of feudal burdens and several disabilities from which they suffered. In 1930-31, the economic depression swept through the length and breadth of the country, bringing untold misery to the peasants owing to the crash of prices of foodgrains. In UP a no-rent campaign was launched; in Gujarat, several tax-resistance movements led by the Congress had preceded the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement and these have been highlighted in the paper.

It should be stressed that the problem varied from region to region and the main sources of the peasant discontent and peasant solidarity are therefore examined. To place the subject in a historical and otherwise appropriate perspective, the attitudes of the radical left parties are also highlighted since they reveal not only the weaknesses of these parties, but also throw light on the correct perceptions of the Indian National Congress on these issues. In the end, it is also pointed out that a question of such a seminal importance, which was designed to bring about a social revolution in the country, was bound to be hotly debated, not only by different parties, but also by groups within the Indian National Congress. In this exercise, it was necessary to deal with the views of Jawaharlal Nehru, who had the vision of reshaping rural class relations, and who actually brought about such a social transformation at the dawn of independence when he became the first Prime Minister of independent India. While analysing these complex processes of social change, it has been observed that agrarian relations also tended to affect adversely the communal situation in the country.

2. Who Constitute the Masses?

Jawaharlal Nehru posed the question in 1921, 'Who constitute the masses of India?' and answered it himself:

It is the kisans in the villages and not a few citizens or vakeels living in the cities. Of what avail would Swaraj be if the kisans' difficulties were not removed? Swaraj really means the removal of the difficulties of the masses of India specially the kisans. Their difficulties in the main relate to such questions as rent, ejectment and possession of land.⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru's observations were not mere rhetoric but stemmed from the belief that this was the essence of the problem which the rural society faced in India under colonial rule. It was obvious that Nehru was not thinking only of the peasant proprietors but was also deeply concerned about the welfare and the future of the dispossessed, the deprived and the oppressed sections of the peasantry. For him, however, the most important question at that time was to strive for the emancipation of the peasantry from feudal burdens, and grant the tenantry security of tenure, so that they were not exploited by the landlords. He wanted the Congress also to recognize the gravity of agrarian crisis.

The deep concern shown by the Congress for the peasantry did not emanate exclusively from the desire to utilize them for the nationalist movement. The upper crust of the peasant classes were impelled as much by patriotic fervour as anybody else. These sentiments tended to infiltrate into several segments of the village society, as was evident from the earlier experience in Champaran, Kheda, and during the course of the Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919. The changes in the composition of the Congress had broadened the social base of the Congress, notably with the launching of the Non-cooperation Movement. In fact, such revolutionary fervour was noticeable in the Congress sessions as was never witnessed before. When the masses were drawn into the anti-imperialist struggle, the character of the Congress itself was transformed. The revolutionary potential of the movement launched under the banner of the Congress although of a non-violent variety, was recognized by Lenin. Jawaharlal Nehru's perceptions were similar. In addition, he felt that the middle classes in India, at that critical juncture, were more revolutionary than the peasantry itself.⁵

Jawaharlal Nehru had the insight to perceive that the village social order was mainly composed of two classes: the landed gentry and the peasantry. The landed classes had a structure of their own, but it was difficult to precisely define the peasantry in terms of class. No doubt, there were different categories of peasants — rich, middle and poor — as a result of which internal contradictions among them could develop, yet Nehru did not go into the intricate distinction of classes obtaining among the peasantry. These distinctions were, perhaps, not so sharp; at any rate, they were not crucial at that juncture, and he felt that it was more relevant to treat the peasantry as a whole as a deprived class,

waging an unequal battle against the landlords. He was also conscious of the fact that distinctions of caste, religion, and community operated in villages and a situation which could lead to a class struggle in the countryside had not developed. It was, therefore, easier to deal with these peasant classes as a mass of peasantry and prepare them for a mass struggle against British imperialism. His judgment and assessment of the rural situation was much more incisive and accurate than that of the leftist intellectuals and party leaders. As President of the Lahore Congress in 1929, in his historic presidential address, Nehru exhorted the Congress volunteers and workers to imbibe the noblest spirit of nationalism and asked them to channelize the mass discontent for a higher purpose, i.e. to initiate 'a social revolution'. He noted with great satisfaction that the Congress workers had already spread over the rural areas and asked the grassroots-level leaders, i.e. the village, taluka and district level leaders, to organize themselves further so that the Congress developed into 'a vast peasant organization',⁶ which would encompass all peasant classes.

If we have given the impression that the Congress was wedded to the task of amelioration of the grievances and conditions of the peasantry purely on humanitarian grounds or as a class organization of the peasantry, the impression should be corrected straightway. The Congress was a political party and was also concerned with mass mobilization for a powerful movement, so that pressure on the ruling power could be mounted for the transfer of power and achievement of independence. In recent years, a considerable body of literature has been produced by a host of competent scholars focusing attention on the causes and the nature of the remarkable phenomenon of mass mobilization under the leadership of the Congress. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the left-oriented political parties also attempted to bring the peasant classes under the pale of their influence but failed miserably in spite of the fact that they aimed to work for the emancipation of the peasantry. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, asked for the maintenance of class harmony and went to the extent of appealing to the peasants to submit to the just demands of the landlords, and yet succeeded in bringing enormous masses of people into the maelstrom of Indian politics and political action. One of the main reasons for the success of his mission was that he identified himself with the village poor and used the vocabulary, idiom and symbols which the simple village folk could understand. His influence seemed all-pervading in the 1920s and 1930s. It is at this stage worth quoting Jawaharlal Nehru's observations in his classic work, *An Autobiography*, which partly provides the rationale behind the success of Mahatma Gandhi in drawing millions of villagers into the mainstream of nationalism. He said:⁷

He [Gandhiji] does represent the peasant masses of India; he is the quintessence of the conscious and sub-conscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation; for he is the idealised personification of those vast millions. . . . He is the great peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life. But India is peasant India and so he knows his India well and reacts to her lightest tremors and gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively; and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment.

The peasantry was no doubt impelled as much by patriotic fervour as by the hope that their lot would be improved once the path was cleared with the end of British rule of which zamindars, the feudal classes, were strong pillars. While asking the peasants to participate in the movement against the British power in India, Gandhiji often observed, with telling effect, that the British government was 'the most powerful zamindar' and the entire strength of the peasantry should be directed against it. The hopes of the peasantry were not belied either. Even during the period of nationalist struggle, several no-tax or no-rent campaigns were initiated by the Congress, notably in Bardoli in 1928 and in UP in 1932-34, which were a great success in so far as their demands for withdrawal or lowering of rents were conceded and substantial remissions were sanctioned by the government. At the same time, the government was forced to undertake regulation of rights of tenants over land, and questions concerning the quantum of rent, eviction and possession over land etc. were sought to be re-examined. Of course, Jawaharlal Nehru stood for more radical changes in rural relations and would have preferred abolition of the zamindari system altogether, to which proposal the British government would not agree.

3. Agrarian Relations under British Rule

Before we take a close look at the social reality obtaining in the Indian countryside during the period of our study, it seems desirable to recapitulate in brief the agrarian relations forged under British rule for a proper understanding of the situation.

Soon after the establishment of British rule in India, 'Permanent Settlement' was introduced in Bengal, Bihar and parts of Orissa. Lord Cornwallis was the architect of this policy. He wished to remodel Indian society on a British pattern. Being a Whig himself and coming as he did from the higher rungs of the nobility, he created big landlords in Bengal on the Western model and vested in them the right to private property in the soil so that, as he believed, the economic progress of India could be ensured. Furthermore, by creating a wealthy landed gentry he laid the social foundations of British rule in India, since he believed that the landed classes would remain loyal to this rule. He fixed an invariable

(permanent) land revenue demand and gave enormous powers to the landlords over their land and tenants. Cornwallis hoped that the aristocracy thus created would initiate an agricultural revolution in India through mechanized farming. It was his firm faith that these newly created propertied classes, endowed with a modern outlook and having ample leisure at their disposal, would work for a better civilization. The essence of the system lay in creating such conditions in the society as would promote unlimited freedom of initiative and enterprise to them. The consequences of the Permanent Settlement, however, proved to be disastrous. It led to absentee landlordism and rack-renting of the peasantry. The settlement was irrevocable, and could not be altered, and the government was left with few options to remedy the evil, although a series of tenancy laws were passed from time to time to grant some relief to the cultivating peasantry and the tenants during the 19th century.

Within two decades of the operation of the zamindari settlement of Bengal, its ill-effects surfaced forcefully. The ancient zamindaris were sold off for non-payment of revenue which was pitched at a very high level since the demand was to be unchangeable for all time to come. These estates were purchased by moneylending classes and members of the petty bureaucracy such as tehsildars, naib-tehsildars, police officers etc., who had hardly any stake in the soil. Rapacious exactions were demanded and gathered from the tenants and peasantry, who eked out a miserable and precarious living. The end product of the process was a decay of agriculture and impoverishment of the countryside. Deriving lessons from the failure of the Bengal Settlement, the government entered into settlements with individual ryots in Madras. This was known as Ryotwari Settlement. This system, in principle, was better suited to the conditions of the country and, to an extent, took the interest of the peasantry into account. But it failed because of the ever changeable and high-pitched land revenue demand of the government. However, the system, as was pointed out by the government, was democratic and was opposed to the aristocratic principles embedded in the zamindari settlement of Bengal. The failure of the ryotwari system was recognized by Thomas Munro, the author of this settlement himself, who confessed in 1824 that villages after villages had been reduced to bankruptcy and were ruined owing to high-pitched revenue demands.⁸

In western India, the region known as Maharashtra today, after the overthrow of the Maratha power, the essential principles of the ryotwari system were further extended. However, no limit was placed on the quantum of land which the individual ryot could possess. Being as much subject to market forces as any other commodity, land could be bought and sold. The customary practice of assigning land to others of

the same caste was given up. In 1818, the entire region of Maharashtra was interspersed with millions of peasant households possessing 15-20 acres of land. Ravinder Kumar, in his insightful study of Maharashtra, noted: "The absence of sharp differences in income in the villages of Maharashtra created a social climate which was devoid of serious conflict and strife. . . ." By 1875, however, the situation had changed. The *Vanis*, the money-lenders, had grown in power and bought ample land, rising in the social scale in the villages. Similarly, in response to the pulls of market economy and other factors, lots of land had changed hands, giving rise to substantial peasant proprietors in the process. Most of the peasant proprietors did not cultivate the soil themselves but engaged rural labour to carry out the tasks connected with cultivation. Similarly, the village officers, like the *deshmukhs*, *patels*, *kulkarnis*, and *mamlatdars*, became powerful farmers who utilized village communal bonds to create a sense of cohesion among the castes and communities in their region.

In northern India, notably in the UP and Delhi regions, what is called the Mahalwari System was established, according to which a village or a group of villages, called a *mahal*, became a unit of settlement, rather than the ryot or his plot of land. In a *mahal* more than one individual could enter into a settlement with the government. The land of the village was owned by several co-parceners, the headman being responsible for collection and payment of revenue to the government. The main flaw of this type of settlement again was the quantum of revenue demand which was fixed at a very high level. Several experiments had been tried for arriving at a rational revenue or rent demand, but essentially the demand was based on what may be called more or less enlightened guesswork. For most Indian villagers land was not only the only source of their livelihood; its possession was also a source of social prestige and status. Hence, most of the ryots continued to hold on to the land, in spite of the high rate of taxation, unless it was utterly unremunerative.

In the 1820s in the UP, and in the 1840s in western India, the Ricardian concept of rent was applied to fix the rent demand. According to this concept, rent was defined as 'net produce'. Its determination involved detailed investigation of the soil and calculation of gross produce obtained from the plot of land, the cost of production, capital investment, profit, depreciation etc. After taking account of the enterprise under these heads and the economic condition of the peasant household, a figure of revenue or rent demand was arrived at. This was an extremely complex method and the government soon realized that such an investigation was impracticable. It involved enormous expenditure and was time-consuming. The ryot hardly kept any account of his enterprise under the heads, cost of production, capital investment etc.,

on the basis of which the settlement could be made. In 1830, in UP, following the net-produce principle, settlement was carried out in villages. It took six years to complete settlement of lands worth Rs 30 lakhs of revenue only. It was estimated that the cost of settlement operations was more than seven lakhs of rupees. Under the circumstances, it was felt that more than hundred years would be needed to complete the settlement operations in north India. Hence, the entire scheme was virtually scrapped.¹⁰ However, calculations based on general considerations were made and an amount of rent was arrived at. When the settlement was finalized in 1833 in the UP, it was stated that 66 per cent of the 'net produce' formed the basis of the revenue demand. Again, experience showed that the calculations went wrong and the demand had been fixed at a very high level. It must be stated that the revenue demand which was fixed in 1833 was the highest ever and that it was lowered progressively in successive settlements undertaken in 1846, 1873 and 1901. It is obvious, therefore, that the entire belt of the UP had suffered from over-assessment. The disastrous effect on the lives of the peasant classes could only be imagined. Professor Ravinder Kumar aptly describes the devastation which 'the utilitarian deluge' brought about in western India.¹¹ Ricardo belonged to that group of radical philosophers in England who were known as Utilitarians. Their radicalism lay in not creating a class of landlords in the Indian countryside, and in the application of the 'net produce' principle in fixing the rent demand which played havoc with the fortunes of the peasant proprietors of all categories.

The cumulative effect of these measures as well as other socio-economic, religious and political factors, particularly in northern India (the UP, Bihar and Banaras regions) was the revolt of 1857 which shook the very foundation of British rule in north India. It is beyond our scope to examine the factors which led to a revolt of such serious proportions, as a result of which, for some months, British rule in these areas did not exist. Several theories have been propounded about the momentous happenings of 1857. Some scholars have considered it as an outcome of feudal resistance supported by the general population of these regions. Others view it as basically an uprising of the peasant classes. It was perhaps the most important event of the 19th century wherein a vast number of Indian soldiers and the civil population united in a violent challenge to British rule. Toynbee called the 1857 revolt 'an encounter between the East and the West', between the two civilizations, implying thereby that the old order in India seemed determined to resist change, and hence fought its last battle against the British Raj. It is interesting to note that when Toynbee visited India in the 1950s, he found a new awakening pulsating in the villages, and a new social order emerging in

the 'unchangeable' peasant India. He felt stimulated to remark that 'one of the most beneficent revolutions in the peasantry's life that have been known so far, to history was being achieved'.¹²

Whatever the character of the revolt of 1857 may have been, it goes without saying that it largely fashioned British policy in UP, Bihar and other affected areas in northern India. A considerable bulk of the rural population of the present-day UP had either actively participated in the revolt or had given assistance to the rebels by supplying information, and providing food, shelter, provisions and labour. Lord Canning, in 1858, therefore, declared that 'these village occupants deserved little consideration from us'. It was also argued that Bengal remained aloof from the revolt mainly because it was a permanently settled area. Therefore, in the affected areas like Oudh and Allahabad, Meerut and Agra Divisions, large landowners were created. The former class of nobility and the jagirdars, who had participated in the rebellion in Oudh, were dispossessed of their lands, which were now assigned to a new class of landowners who had been loyal to the British as a reward for their services. The Banaras Division was already a permanently settled area and the Raja of Banaras and several other important landowners continued to manage their large estates. It is interesting to note that, in 1901, there were as many as 270 landowners known as *taluqdars* in Oudh, paying Rs 9,893,393 as land revenue to government out of the gross revenue demand of Rs 16,440,891; which meant 66 per cent of the land was parcelled out to the landed gentry comprising Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.¹³ Among the Hindus, very few Brahmins and high caste Rajputs were made *taluqdars* since it was believed that the bulk of the rebel force during 1857 came from these castes. In Allahabad, Meerut, Bulandshahar, Saharanpur, Dehra Dun, Gorakhpur, etc., small and big landlords were created according to the needs of political expediency during the second half of the 19th century. Under the inspiration of the British Government, powerful associations of landlords were set up, such as the British Indian Association in Oudh, the Agra Landholders Association, the Muzaffarpur Zamindar Association, etc. By 1919, however, peasants and the tenants of the Oudh region had become very restive. In 1920-21, widespread agrarian disturbances had taken place in the taluqdari areas in Rai Bareilly, Pratabgarh, Faizabad, and other regions, resulting in unprecedented social turbulence and violence, leading to loss of life and property.¹⁴

Below the landlords in the rural social ladder were those substantial peasants, who may be called peasant proprietors. In 1930, it was estimated that there were as many as 1.2 million peasant proprietors in the UP, who owned and cultivated the land themselves. Their tenure was permanent as long as they paid the negotiated rent demand; and they

could not be disturbed in the possession of their land. The rent, however, was liable to be raised at each settlement, which was undertaken every thirty years. A greater part of 35 million acres of agricultural land in the UP was, however, cultivated by rent-paying tenants of landlords. These tenants were of several kinds; occupancy tenants, statutory or non-statutory tenants, privileged tenants, and itinerant or ordinary tenants. In addition to the above, there were what were called *khudkasht* tenants, who had hereditary rights in the land and which could be transferred to the family. In the case of tenants working on *sir* lands of the zamindars, the zamindar could evict the tenant every year. The number of tenants was estimated in 1930 to be between five and six million. The occupancy tenants had the right to hold land for a period of 10 or 12 years in the non-taluqdari areas and for 7 years in taluqdari areas, after which they had to enter into a fresh agreement in respect of payment of rent. The statutory tenants paid higher rents whereas the privileged tenants who were mostly high-caste tenants, paid less rent, for the same kind of land, on account of their privilege of being in the upper-caste bracket.¹⁵ Ordinary or itinerant tenants were those who had no rights whatsoever over land and they could be ejected at the pleasure of the landlords. This pattern of land relations was more or less operative in other parts of the country also. The terminology used for different categories of tenants varied from region to region, but the tenantry in general suffered from several disabilities.

In Bengal, a major case of social conflict arose owing to the plight of share-croppers, who cultivated the land of *jotedars* on the basis of the crop being shared equally between the cultivator and the *jotedar*. In Bengal, substantial landowners exercised considerable authority over both *jotedars* and share-croppers, as well as several other categories of peasants. The major evils from which the tenantry suffered were eviction from land; upward movement of rent, every seven, ten or twelve years, as the case might be; a series of illegal exactions to which they were subjected in the zamindari and taluqdari areas, such as *nazrana*, *hathiana*, *motorana*, in addition to gifts which they gave the taluqdars at the time of marriage, social and religious functions, and the services they rendered to them without payment (*begar*). It is not necessary to go into the details of these oppressive levies, which are well known in India, and have been vividly described by great Indian novelists and story-tellers.

The landed aristocracy could be said to have had a social structure, their own way of life, and consciousness of belonging to a class. They owned land and were jealous of their property rights and the privileges which they had enjoyed for generations. By virtue of their ownership of land, they enjoyed a superior position in society. That the zamindars did

exact illegal cesses with impunity and successfully resisted the accrual of occupancy rights on lands possessed by tenants of twelve years' standing in certain parts of the UP, say in Agra, was undoubted. The zamindars employed muscle-men for browbeating recalcitrant villagers and tenants. They would not permit sinking of wells or planting of trees and orchards or construction of houses on certain types of land lest occupancy rights would arise out of them. On top of all this, the *taluqdars* in the UP did nothing to promote economic development or to initiate long-term projects of social progress. It is recorded by the Settlement Officers that only one *taluqdar* attempted to dig tubewells in his territory before 1920. In 1920/21, at least 40 per cent of the *taluqdars* were in debt in spite of the surplus which they had appropriated. It must be mentioned here that the British Government was no less to be blamed for this state of affairs than the *taluqdars*. When it was known in 1920 that *nazrana* was being exacted mercilessly, no law was passed to stop it. On the contrary, the quantum of the exaction taken by the zamindars was considered as a sure indication of the tenant's ability to pay. For instance, the Settlement Commissioner, A.C. Turner, while completing the roster year settlement in 1929, included in the land revenue demand the entire sum of the *nazrana*, thus raising the total demand much higher.¹⁶

The peasant proprietors in UP do not seem to have been a very flourishing and affluent class. Yet there was a fair sprinkling of rich peasants and small zamindars with substantial holdings from whom the nationalist leadership derived support. C.A. Bayly's study of the Allahabad region shows that petty landholders, prosperous tenants, shop-owners and middle-sized commercial entrepreneurs worked for the Congress in the 1920s and 30s.¹⁷ Gyanendra Pandey's study also suggests that the Congress leaders and organizers in Agra, Allahabad, Rai Bareilly, and other places had a sufficiently strong financial support, having been rooted in land and commerce.¹⁸ What they do not show, however, is that both the middle peasants as well as the tenants of different caste groups formed the backbone of the mass movements launched in 1920-21 and 1930-31 by the Congress, a subject which will be dealt with in depth in the latter part of this study. It should also be stressed that very close links between the kisan organizations and the Indian National Congress were forged during this period. The Indian National Congress leadership was no doubt dominated by representatives of the professional classes and the intelligentsia, but the leadership at the grassroots level and from the urban centres, who looked to the central leaders for guidance, hailed from this class of what may loosely be called middle gentry and tenantry.

The conditions of peasants and tenants were, no doubt, depressed owing to the dominance of the landed class in UP which was predomi-

nantly agricultural. Only a few cities like Kanpur, Agra and Banaras could boast of industrial and manufacturing enterprises. New industries, such as the sugar industry, had developed in Gorakhpur, but this had only a marginal impact on the agrarian economy of the region. Traditional handicrafts flourished in some of the middle-ranking towns, but the rural belt, by and large, continued to be a supplier of raw materials, producer of foodgrains, vegetables and fruits. The agricultural character of the taluqdari region was even more pronounced. The districts of Unao, Rai Bareli, Sitapur, Hardoi, Kheri, Faizabad, Gonda, Behraich, Sultanpur, Pratabgarh, and Barabanki formed a sort of feudal belt in the United Provinces. In these areas, the number of peasant proprietors was large but their economic position was far from satisfactory. Most of them were marginal farmers who rose just above the self-sufficient economic life.

Rai Bareli and Pratabgarh, which were prominent centres of kisan agitation as well as of the nationalist movement, demonstrated considerable social and economic equality among the tenantry in general. The *khudkasht* ryots, and the occupancy tenants were quite numerous in Rai Bareli. But there was a predominance of petty tenants. In the district, 3/5th of the land was owned by the taluqdars. As for the tenants, 35 out of 100 families held 2½ acres of land or less each; another 35 out of 100 families held between 2½ and 5 acres; and 15 out of 100 families held more than 74 acres of land. Nearly 70 per cent of the tenants, therefore, possessed less than 5 acres of land and must, from time to time, have worked as labourers in the fields of substantial tenants.

There was considerable equality in respect of distribution of land among the different caste groups, Brahmins, Thakurs, Kayasths, Ahirs, Kurmis and Gadarias had almost equal percentage of land under their control as tenants. The Kurmis and Ahirs were medium-sized proprietors as well as petty tenants. The same was true of the high-caste tenants. Members of these caste groups attended both the Kisan Sabha meetings as well as those organized by the leaders of the Non-cooperation Movement. In Jaunpur, Pratabgarh and Sultanpur Districts, the Kisan Sabha agitation was popular amongst the Thakurs, who were in a majority in the region as far as their tenancy holdings were concerned. It should be stated here that the Kisan Sabha leaders mostly worked under the guidance of leaders of the Non-cooperation Movement.¹⁹

The growth of rich and middle peasants towards the close of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th was a common phenomenon of most regions in India. In Maharashtra, for instance, Ravinder Kumar has shown the predominance of the newly emerged rich Kunbis and Vanis, which produced social tensions in Maharashtra. These social

groups, endowed now with sufficient economic power and social following, began challenging the Brahmin dominance and some sort of non-Brahmin movement began taking shape. It has also been suggested, in this study, that the Kunbis and Vanis supported the Congress, whereas many of the old leaders from the Brahmin groups tended to have leanings towards moderate politics. Similar conclusions have been drawn by David Hardiman in his excellent study of peasant nationalism in Gujarat. The backbone of the movement launched by Gandhiji during Kheda satyagraha as well as later in Bardoli, where the 'no-tax' campaign was the most important issue in 1928, was supplied by the rich Patidar peasants, strong support coming from the middle peasant groups also.²⁰ Professor M.S.A. Rao, in his study on the backward classes movement in South India, has also pointed out the fact of the Sanskritization and solidarity movements among Yadavas and other castes, leading to upward social mobility which more or less occurred in the wake of improvement in their economic status.²¹ The SNDP movement among the Ezhava community in Kerala, for instance, was born out of their sense of deprivation, and, after a considerable struggle, the community was able to uplift itself in the 20th century, so much so that they are no more regarded as a backward community in present-day Census Reports.²² The middle peasants were the backbone of this movement and the ideological inspiration came from Vedantic philosophical traditions of Hinduism.

Thus social change of tremendous significance was sweeping the length and breadth of the country in the early decades of the 20th century. Soon after the Mopilah uprisings in 1920-21, tenants associations were formed in Kerala and a movement for amelioration of tenants' conditions was launched, resulting in tenancy legislation. Studies of seminal importance have appeared which show that the political and the agrarian movements coalesced, overlapped and converged at most periods during the mass movements launched as anti-imperialist struggles, under the aegis of the Indian National Congress and radical parties.

The synoptic overview presented here of the social reality obtaining in the countryside in India on the eve of the launching of the Non-cooperation Movement in 1920 demonstrates the growth of social tensions arising out of crystallization of the landed interests on the one hand and the emergence of new elements of social cleavage which threatened to tear apart the fabric of Indian society on the other. In more senses than one, the landed aristocracy had failed to provide dynamic leadership in bringing about socio-economic transformation in the country, in spite of the fact that they were a powerful class enjoying political patronage under British rule. As long as a numerous class of peasant

proprietors and substantial tenants did not emerge to challenge their social dominance, they remained secure and maintained their pre-eminent position in society. A critical appraisal of the impact of the nationalist movement and the agitation of the kisans forcefully drives home the point that social change of far-reaching significance had occurred disturbing the equilibrium in society. We propose to deal briefly with this aspect in the next section.

4. The Indian National Congress and the Kisan Movement in the United Provinces²³

Some time in 1917 the first Kisan Sabha was formed by 'a small group of Nationalists in Allahabad' led by Madan Mohan Malaviya. Malaviya drafted the rules of the association and funds for it were made available by the Home Rule League. The reason for the establishment of a kisan organization was to refute the charge of the government, often levelled against the Home Rulers, that they 'did not represent the silent masses of India'. Hence the Home Rulers, in an attempt to reach the peasant, founded associations in villages, tehsils and districts. By June 1919, Malaviya claimed that 450 branches of the organization had been opened in UP, Punjab and Bihar, with active workers numbering 3,500.

The political origins and affiliation of the Kisan Sabha Movement was made clear right from the start. Malaviya became the President of UP Kisan Sabha and most of the Allahabad leaders were associated with it. In December 1918, at the Delhi session of the Indian National Congress, more than 1,000 kisan representatives, of whom 700 came from UP, were present. The expenses of these delegates were met by the Congress. The Secretary of the UP Kisan Sabha, through the columns of the Hindi daily, *Abhyudaya*, asked the peasants to form Congress committees in their villages and tehsils and help the Congress in every possible way. In February 1919, under the editorship of Pandit Sunder Lal, a Congress leader from Allahabad, another paper, *Bhavishya*, was launched. Notice was given that a weekly paper, *Kisan*, was being established soon, which was done. These papers were the outcome of Malaviya's initiative and were meant to educate the 'silent masses' in the countryside. Next year, 400 peasant delegates from UP attended the Amritsar Congress. At this session, Malaviya proposed the formation of an All India Peasant Congress but nothing came of this.

In the district of Jaunpur bordering the taluqdari region of Southern Oudh, Ram Chandra Sharma founded a Kisan Sabha in a village named Rur in 1918. Within a short time 330 branches were opened in Oudh. During the Non-cooperation Movement, the UP Kisan Sabha and Oudh Kisan Sabha worked in collaboration.

Although redressal of the peasant grievances was made the central theme of Kisan Sabha deliberations, its political overtones were apparent. In 1918, under the aegis of the Congress and the UP Kisan Sabha, a memorial was prepared approving the Congress-League scheme of political reforms. Signatures to the memorial were obtained from the village folk and sent to the secretary of state and the viceroy. The memorial was adopted later by the Kisan Sabha conference of 300 delegates and 2,000 'visitors' held at Allahabad during the Kumbha Mela (February) 1920. These 'visitors' were mostly peasant observers from the villages. Apart from supporting the political demands envisaged in the Congress-League scheme, the memorial put forward the following demands:

1. Panchayats to be established in villages to decide civil suits up to Rs 500 and be empowered to deal with all non-cognizable criminal offences.
2. Introduction of permanent settlement with full transferable and heritable rights.
3. Enhancement of revenue and rent to be subject to enactment of the Imperial Council.
4. Abolition of zamindars' privileges.
5. Revision of law of ejectment for non-payment of rent.

Though demands for the removal of disabilities from which the peasantry was suffering were made, it was obvious that the leadership was more keen to enlist kisan support for their political movement. The government was quite perceptive when it reported in 1919 that 'the ulterior motive of the founders of the Sabha was undoubtedly the recruiting of cultivators to the Home Rule movement'. But as time passed and the Kisan Sabha movement made progress, the political and the socio-economic questions were mixed up more intimately. Madan Mohan Malaviya was conservative in his approach and he did not wish to embroil himself in the landlord-tenant question in depth. However, politics demanded that land relations be regulated amicably. Hence the Kisan Sabhas under Malaviya's influence were persuaded to promote 'mutual trust and cordiality' among the landlords and tenants and also between the government and the governed. Nevertheless, by August 1919, relations between them began deteriorating. The UP Intelligence reported that district organizers of Kisan Sabhas were appointed who were paid salaries of Rs 200 per month. Their activities led to a tenant riot in Ballia. Following the demand made for the institution of panchayats for the settlement of disputes in the memorial of 1918, these officers of the district Kisan Sabhas established panchayats and legally evicted tenants were brought back to their lands. The deputy collector remarked that these Kisan Sabhas could and did 'undo the proceedings

of the Courts of law' and that the movement in Ballia was becoming 'unscrupulously all powerful' (sic). Thus, despite professions of cordiality, the zamindar was bound to come into conflict with the Kisan Sabha leadership. According to the report the two leaders involved in the Ballia riot had no other means of livelihood than the salaries and allowances which they received from the Sabha.

Towards the close of 1918, however, it was apparent that the influence of the Home Rulers was on the decline. The Rowlatt Act passed in early 1919 gave an unexpected impetus to the political agitation and the architect of this agitation was Gandhi and not the Home Rulers. Shrewd and able politician as Gandhi was, he dramatized the situation with consummate skill by condemning the Act as a symbol of British tyranny. The Act violated the tenets of natural justice and the principles of the rule of law on which the British system of justice was avowedly based. The elite groups in general and the legal profession in particular responded to Gandhi's call for the observance of a countrywide hartal in April 1919. The urban centres in UP, small and big, were agog with activity in April 1919. Protest meetings, demonstrations and processions were organized and complete hartal was observed in most towns and cities in UP on an appointed day.

In the Oudh region, Lucknow and Faizabad were prominent in anti Rowlatt Act demonstrations. Most of the local barristers, vakils, Arya Samajists and Khilafat agitators took part in the demonstration against the government. At the Faizabad meeting, attended by 10,000 persons, Kedar Nath, Kamta Prasad, Nand Kishore (all Arya Samajists and connected with the Kisan Sabha movement) were prominent speakers. Other notables were Krishan Lal Kaul of Allahabad, Gyanendra Nath Chatterjee (vakil), and Sarfaraz Ali (barrister) and Narayan Swami of the Sewa Samiti. The withdrawal of the black act was the principal demand but the district magistrate reported that the main aim of the agitation, as mentioned to him by some of these leaders, was to educate and train the people for future political agitation. In Agra, during Friday prayers at the Juma Masjid, 'Hindus were admitted in several thousands' and Muslims joined Hindus in temples and prayed for the cancellation of the Rowlatt Act. Kanpur had the distinction of holding a mammoth public meeting with 70,000 persons attending it.

A most significant outcome of the Rowlatt Act agitation in UP, observed the Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the province, was that 'the movement has gained strength in the villages' although a great majority of the people did not understand the meaning of the Act. But all of them thought that the police were empowered to arrest anyone on any charges according to the Act.

The cumulative effect of these agitations — Home Rule and Rowlatt Act — was to politicize a sizeable section of rural society. There was yet another instrument of political change, namely elections, which was to lead to further politicization. Under Madan Mohan Malaviya's guidance the moderate section of the Indian National Congress was prepared to work out a dyarchical form of government as proposed by the Montford Reforms of 1919. Krishna Kant Malaviya contested the election for the council from Jaunpur constituency against Thakur Hari Pal Singh, a prominent taluqdar of Jaunpur. In the columns of *Abhyudaya* throughout 1919 and 1920, virulent attacks were made on the landlords for their rapacity. The *Abhyudaya* devoted a whole page to the grievances of the cultivators. Injustice meted out to them by their oppressors, the taluqdars, was highlighted and the Kisan Sabhas were urged to launch agitations. The subjects discussed in detail were rent, poverty, hunger, food problems and the expropriation of the surplus from land. Who should have it, the nation or the landlords, it asked? Simultaneously with the drive launched against taluqdars, the government also came under sharp criticism. In a sarcastic article, the *Abhyudaya* counted 'the blessings' of British rule and asked the question, 'Why had India become a graveyard?' Six million people died of influenza in UP in 1918 and 24.3 million perished for want of food and the effect of epidemics between 1875 and 1918 under the benevolent rule of the British. While the expenditure on wars increased and the economy of Britain prospered at the expense of Indian economy, the per capita income of Indians remained at a paltry sum of Rs 30 whereas taxes accounted for Rs 4-12-0 per Indian. Pandit Indra Narain Dwivedi, the Secretary of the UP Kisan Sabha and a close associate of Malaviya, attacked the government policy of giving representation in the Council to the landholders and not to the tenants and kisans. Election meetings were held, speeches delivered, resolutions passed at the well attended meetings, pamphlets distributed and journals and newspapers used to whip up election propaganda. Thus modern means and methods were employed for the mobilization of the electorate and the public on such an extensive scale for the first time. Along with the election speeches, resolutions were passed demanding political reform and reduction in rent, amendment of eviction laws and destruction of zamindari privileges. K.K. Malaviya was elected with a majority of 4,000 votes.

Although, owing to the literacy and property qualification, the number of voters was restricted to about one million, the impact of the election in the countryside was considerable. Rich tenants and substantial peasants could exercise suffrage. However, only three lakhs of voters exercised their right to vote on the polling day, 30 November 1920, in UP. The non-cooperation party had also toured the districts

dissuading the people from participating in elections. Gandhi was in Allahabad on the day of polling and had paid a visit to Pratabgarh a month earlier. He was opposed to these elections, but non-cooperation as a policy had not yet been decided on by the Congress. The resolution for non-cooperation was passed at the Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920. But even before the formal passage of the non-cooperation resolution the Kisan Conference of Ayodhya, held on 20 December 1920, with an attendance of over 50,000, was advised by the leaders to adopt non-cooperation if the eviction laws were not amended. Gandhi's name, it seems, was 'freely used' and the people were told that only Gandhi could get the eviction laws abolished.

Throughout 1920, Gandhi was busy mobilizing public opinion and preparing for the eventual Non-cooperation Movement. The Malaviya group in the Congress was unable to appreciate the aggressiveness of the non-cooperation programme and creed. The rift between the moderate wing and the non-cooperators became more and more manifest as time passed. Opposed to Gandhi's wishes, Malaviya had supported the idea of entering the councils. The *Leader* proudly proclaimed that 'be it said to his [Madan Mohan Malaviya's] credit, he has refused to yield ground', that 'he has not surrendered to M.K. Gandhi's programme', as C.R. Das, B.C. Pal and Lajpat Rai had done. Pandit Indra Narain Dwivedi, the Secretary of the UP Kisan Sabha, and a staunch opponent of non-cooperation, managed to thwart the passage of the non-cooperation resolution at the executive meeting of the UP Kisan Sabha held on 24 October 1920. The Oudh Kisan Sabha which had adopted it, should, for this reason, he argued, be separated from the UP Kisan Sabha. But Dwivedi's leadership of the Sabha was short-lived. In another general meeting held some time in January 1921, Purushottam Das Tandon, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gauri Shankar Misra (Vice-President of the Oudh Kisan Sabha) and Ranga Iyer managed to oust Indra Narain Dwivedi and the Malaviya group by electing Jagannath Prasad Shukla, Sangam Lal Agarwala and Revendra Nath Basu as office bearers and members of the Executive Committee of the UP Kisan Sabha. By the end of December 1920, and the beginning of January 1921, the movements under the Kisan Sabha according to an official report 'appear to have been completely captured by the non-cooperating party, and there is one movement only in progress at the present time and that is the Non-cooperation Movement'.

Without the urban-based leadership which maintained close links with rural centres of unrest, it was doubtful whether a kisan movement of such dimensions would have been possible. Harcourt Butler was categorical in his assessment when he said 'unfortunately the stream of agitation from Allahabad has produced trouble in Southern Oudh'.

J.C. Faunthrope, Commissioner of Lucknow, observed in a similar vein: 'They [non-cooperators] are, in my opinion, much more intent on stirring up trouble generally with a view to making government impossible than in improving the conditions of the tenantry.' According to him, the non-cooperators had not so far been able to stir up the general public to support them, hence they turned their attention to rural regions. He said: 'They have succeeded in stirring up the cultivators of Oudh to a state of considerable excitement because the cultivators have in many cases considerable grievances against the landlords.' At the beginning, the kisan interest in non-cooperation may have been marginal, but since it promised abolition of practices like *nazarana* and ejectments, they became intensely interested.

By 1920, Gandhi had displaced Madan Mohan Malaviya on the village scene. 'For the present, the fact must be faced that Gandhi's word is supreme and even the local hero Malaviji has been displaced.' According to reports during the council elections of November 1920, when the word went round that Gandhi would not like the kisans to vote, large numbers of voters refused to do so. Wherever votes were obtained by Radha Kant Malaviya and his agents, 'it was only because they [the agents] told the voters: "Gandhi Babu says you are not to vote at all, or if you do vote for Malaviji."' In 1921, Motilal Nehru became the President of the UP Kisan Sabha.

In December 1920 and between January and March 1921, widespread disturbances took place in Rai Bareilly, Pratabgarh, Sultanpur and Faizabad Districts, accompanied by loss of life and property. Isolated riots also took place in Allahabad and Lucknow. In Pratabgarh, the agitation began as a protest by tenants against illegal cesses and ended with protests against arbitrary ejectment. In Sultanpur, it took the form of a no-tax campaign. Here, mostly the high caste tenants participated in the movement. In Faizabad, the movement took the form of a rising of agrarian labour, who were led to believe that swaraj would be followed by a redistribution of land in which they would get a share. In Rai Bareilly the rioting was quite serious, and was directed against the evil of ejectment from land.

The leadership of the movement was taken up by Baba Ram Chandra who acted on behalf of the Congress and the Non-cooperation Movement. Other leaders like Deo Narain and Kedar Nath supported him. These leaders were outsiders and their peasant linkages with the movement were rather nebulous and recent. Their popularity was not dependent on caste affiliation; in fact, a lack of it enabled them to mobilize and unite all types of kisan sabhas, even those which may have been caste-dominated. Besides, a certain amount of high idealism fired by the zeal to uphold the national cause helped in giving them a stature among

their fellowmen in the villages. The spirit of nationalism mingled, however vaguely, with the village psyche, and the charisma provided by their being disciples of Gandhi, enabled them to gather a large following. V.N. Mehta, a member of the Indian Civil Service, who was asked to enquire into the causes of the agrarian riots in Pratabgarh, in his valuable report, gave a graphic account of disabilities from which the tenants suffered and of the leadership qualities of some of the leaders, such as Baba Ram Chandra.²⁴

Ram Chandra 'supplied some mental pabulum to a people usually intellectually starved in these out of the way places'. He began with discourses on *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Dharma*, which were spiced with flings at individuals or at the system of land administration. Within a short period his speeches displayed political overtones and, as a constructive worker, he emphasized the need of the amelioration of the agricultural classes and of involving the villages in the political movement of the time. Mehta, in his extremely valuable and able report comments on Ram Chandra's indomitable resolve and vigour: 'He worked for them, slaved for them, interceded with people in authority for them and thus secured their confidence.'

Leadership at the village level seemed to rest on family position, privileges of wealth, prestige, and caste affiliations to some extent. *The Leader* was of the opinion that most of the leaders came from the high caste tenants, who were a 'sensitive' and 'spirited' section of the population. 'However slavish the tenant population may be', it said, 'it included in its ranks men of the higher classes who cannot meekly bear maltreatment'. Mostly the high caste tenants were treated as 'privileged' tenants who paid lower rates of rent as compared to other castes. They were also habitually bad rent payers since they were mostly in debt on account of improvident expenditure incurred during social ceremonies like those connected with marriage or death. These high caste tenants were not always wealthy enough to assume roles of leadership. H.R.C. Hailey, Commissioner of Faizabad, observed that Ram Chandra was not able to make much headway in Sultanpur since there was 'an unusual predominance of the higher castes' as tenants. He explained that 'Many of these belong to the same clans as the landlords and even if they have not obtained proprietary rights, enjoy a certain measure of protection from the heads of the family. This point is of importance because the higher castes here in parts of Sultanpur and Faizabad opposed the formation of Sabhas in their villages.'

Ram Chandra was most popular in the Pratabgarh region. In parts of Pratabgarh 'there is a mass of low caste tenants without any rights and there is a comparative absence of under-proprietors of favoured high caste tenants ready to assist the landlords in maintaining the status quo.

Put in another way there is no break-water between the landlord and the tenant-at-will.'

The report stated that the Kurmis combined better than other castes, since they were bound by strong kinship ties and clan sentiments. When aroused, they readily resorted to violence. Most of these Kurmis it seems had lost their land and proprietary rights before the Mutiny, and were a habitually turbulent class of tenants. In Rai Bareli, the principal Kurmi leader who was opposed to the taluqdar himself a Kurmi, had lost his land during the Mutiny. Again, against the Sikh taluqdar, Sardar Bir Pal Singh, nicknamed General Dyer because he was alleged to have fired a shot on the crowd during the Rai Bareli disturbances, was pitched a Rajput tenant as kisan leader, whose forefathers were dispossessed of their lands in the Mutiny. E.C. Bayley, Home Member in the Governor General's Council, observed in 1873: 'If you meet a notorious offender, a man who had made himself conspicuous in crime, and who had with him, as was very often the case, the sympathy of the large body of the community — if you investigate the history of this man, you would find in the majority of instances, that he was originally an ousted proprietor.'

Family quarrels sometimes led to village feuds and some sort of leadership emerged out of these cleavages. One such instance was provided by Brij Pal Singh and Jhanku Singh at Karhaiya village in Salon tehsil of Rai Bareli, where a riot led by them took place in March 1921, resulting in police firing.

Brij Pal Singh, a Rajput, was a man of substantial means. He had 300 bighas of land. He was also a sepoy in the 9th Bhopal Infantry and had come home on leave four months before the agrarian riots took place in Rai Bareli. Jhanku Singh was related to the taluqdar's family and possessed 438 bighas of land which were leased out to him on a contractual basis for farming. Both of these leaders were opposed to the widowed taluqdar lady, Jadu Nath Kunwar. Brij Pal Singh was particularly hostile to her manager. These leaders formed a sabha in the village and began attacking the taluqdar's management demanding, on the one hand, the dismissal of the manager and, on the other, a better deal for the tenantry. Brij Pal Singh addressed a gathering of several thousand persons on 20 March 1921, a weekly market day, and in the evening besieged the house of the taluqdar. Throughout the night of the siege cries of 'Mahatma Gandhiji ki jai' were raised by the crowd with threats of attacks. Next morning, Brij Pal Singh and Jhanku Singh were arrested, after resistance had been broken, during which the police had to open fire, killing a few persons.

The leadership pattern provided by Brij Pal Singh was typical. While he was attempting to wrest power from the landlord on the one hand, a

clash of interest between the substantial tenants and landlords, led to an activization of the peasant classes, on the other. This type of leadership influence, however, was not necessarily confined to the narrow limits of the village. Even at the village level, whenever broader issues were brought to the fore, a large following ensued. In a large number of instances, the middle-ranking leaders arrived on the scene, formulated the demands, linked the specific with the broad issues, organized the protest movement and took it out of the narrow grooves of village politics. Most of the village leaders obeyed these leaders and called their men out for the kisan conferences or eventual uprisings.

It is obvious from the above account that the kisan sabhas owed their birth to nationalist politics, and that the Non-cooperation Movement gave an ideological thrust and inspiration to the kisan movement in 1920-21. Gandhi, by no means, could be considered a kisan leader, but no other leader in Indian history came to be so closely identified with masses of kisans as he. He upheld the values of the peasant society and culture. His belief in God and religion endeared him to the village community. His transparent honesty and commitment to truth and non-violence also enhanced his reputation among the rural people. His association with the kisan sabha deliberations was not intimate; he addressed their meetings only now and then. But his whole personality, outlook and philosophy of life captivated the masses, whom he led with consummate skill and fervour as no other leader could do. He also had his finger on the pulse of the people and moved with the temper of the times. He said:

The movement is gathering momentum among the masses. I will be ever on the move creating the only sanction the Government will respect. I do not think the intelligentsia have any weapon in their armoury that will bend the mighty British to their will. The people are intelligent. They bow before authority but they revere those who stand for God and Truth I want them all to feel a common urge for regeneration through breaking their chains of slavery. These chains are as much social and economic as political.²⁵

The kisan leaders pledged themselves to work for village uplift. In their programme, sinking of wells, digging of tanks, planting of orchards, preservation of jungle tracts for the grazing of cattle, were given prominence. Baba Ram Chandra, the foremost leader of the kisan movement in the villages of southern Oudh, appealed to the kisans to reserve half the area of their land for sowing with grain crops and the other half for cotton. He urged that grain depots should be established at six-mile intervals; female education should be promoted; and, finally, a union should be established of zamindars, kisans and labourers. He

appealed to the kisans to lend full support to the Non-cooperation Movement. Later, Motilal Nehru, who became the president of the Kisan Sabha, exhorted the kisans to join the Non-cooperation Movement and work for swaraj.

An analysis of the leadership of the Kisan Sabha²⁶ shows that, at its top layer the leadership were elite groups. They were mostly prosperous pleaders like Gauri Shankar Misra who was the Vice-President of the Oudh Kisan Sabha in 1920. Mata Badal was another influential member of the sabha. Gauri Shankar Misra was the brother of Har Karan Nath Misra who was a barrister and who rose to be a high court judge at Lucknow. During the hey-day of Malaviya's ascendancy these leaders worked in close collaboration with him. But with the emergence of the Non-cooperation Movement, they came in contact with Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gauri Shankar Misra was responsible for bringing the district sabhas under one unit and had them affiliated to the central sabha known as the Oudh Kisan Sabha.

Among the prominent leaders of the Congress who took keen interest in kisan sabha activities since the middle of 1920 were Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottam Das Tandon, Syed Haider Mehndi (brother of an Allahabad barrister, Syed Zafar Mehndi), Bishambhar Nath Bajpai of Unao (Correspondent of *The Independent*), Bishambhar Dayal Bajpai (who became Secretary of the UP Congress Committee in 1922), Pandit Jagannath Prasad (vakil of Unao), Lalan Ji, the Arya Samaj leader from Faizabad, and Ganesh Shanker Vidyarathi, editor of *Pratap*, who was to become President of the UP Congress. (Vidyarathi was killed in 1931 during a Hindu-Muslim riot at Kanpur, while working for communal harmony.) The Deputy Superintendent of Police of Rai Bareilly, S.R. Meyers, gave the names of 'the so-called Kisan Sabha volunteers' who had been working in the Rai Bareilly District throughout January 1921, the month of widespread uprisings. They were Pandit Bal Krishan, Pandit Uma Shankar, Babu Gaya Prasad, Bansi Lal, Azizuddin, Piare Lal, Ram Bharose, Onkar Mall, Mahabir Prasad, Bhola Prasad, Kunj Behari, Baij Nath, Kali Charan and Dr Awantika Prasad, all from Kanpur; Udit Narain and Devi Dutt from Allahabad, Bishamber Dayal Tripathi of Unao, and Bhisen Dutt from Banaras. All these workers urged the people to support the non-cooperation programme of swaraj, swadeshi, and boycott of government schools, and demanded a better deal for the tenants and urged them to maintain unity.

In October 1920, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru attended and addressed meetings of the kisan sabhas in Pratabgarh.²⁷ The Ayodhya meeting of 20 December 1920 was attended by 50,000 kisans. This was organized by Gauri Shanker Misra and Baba Ram Chandra. The Faizabad disturbances which took place on 12-14 January 1921 were in a way an

outcome of the inflammatory speeches delivered there. The peasants returned to their homes with a new awareness of unity among them and took the law into their hands with a suddenness unanticipated by the leaders themselves. At Rai Bareli also, widespread rioting took place at various places in the first half of January 1921. The Kisan Sabha conference held at Faizabad under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru on 27 January 1921 was equally significant. Nearly 40,000 persons attended the meeting.²⁸ Non-cooperation and amendment of tenancy laws were the main themes of the conference. Many kisan leaders from Oudh attended the conference, of whom Ram Chandra, Kedar Nath, Deo Narain, Tribhuvan Dutt, Sheo Ram Tewari, Naqeshwar Lal, Hafiz Alam, Mohamad Nabi, Vishwanath Sharma, Lallanji and Sarju Pande were prominent speakers. Gandhi addressed another Faizabad gathering after the occurrence of disturbances on 10 February 1922 in which he condemned violence, stressed the need for class harmony and urged the people to face government power with fearlessness, following the path of non-violence, which was the path of the brave.

Among the middle-ranking leaders in the peasant movement were some who were mostly outsiders and whose peasant linkages were rather nebulous and only too recent. Their popularity was not dependent on caste affiliations and they were able to unite all types of peasants in the kisan sabhas. Most of these leaders were workers of the Indian National Congress and were able to gather a large following. Leadership at the grassroots level in the villages rested on family positions, privileges of wealth, prestige, and caste affiliations, to some extent. Most of the leaders were high-caste tenants, as mentioned by H.R.C. Hailey, Commissioner of Faizabad. Also, a large section of ordinary tenants from other castes who had no rights whatsoever had participated in the Rai Bareli and Pratabgarh agrarian disturbances of 1920-21. None of these classes were sharply defined. However, the leadership was still in the hands of pleaders, vakils and other professionals who had an interest in land, though they were mostly town-dwellers. They belonged to the middle classes and, by virtue of their abilities acquired through education, professional skills and political leadership, were able to lead the movement. Most of them were conscious of the emergence of a mass society, which was in the process of formation and which had appeared on the political horizon.

The conflict that ensued during the movement was essentially between peasant proprietors and the aristocracy, not necessarily between 'poor' peasants and the landed gentry. The conflict was for both power and for economic salvation. This new class which emerged in response to modern political developments was an important class which had spearheaded the leadership of the Indian National Congress. Jawaharlal

Nehru was able to sense the importance of such a group of people emerging as a powerful factor in the political development of the country, and said that this middle class was endowed with considerable revolutionary fervour and was prepared to take up the leadership of the masses and of the country.

5. Congress-led Peasant Struggles in Bihar, Bengal, Gujarat and South India

In Bihar, another province dominated by large landholders, the kisan movement followed an uneven course. Although some kisan sabhas were formed in North Bihar around 1920 or so, the peasant movement gained momentum only after 1929, when Swami Sahjanand Saraswati took up its leadership, supported by the Bihar Congress leaders. Walter Hauser tells us that a kisan sabha had meanwhile been constituted by Swami Sahjanand in Patna in 1928, which derived its strength, to begin with, mainly from Bhumihar Brahmin Sabhas, which were caste organizations and in which many leading figures of the Congress participated.²⁹ In 1929, the Bihar Province Kisan Sabha was constituted with the help of a number of Congressmen, among whom were Ram Briksh Benipuri and Kailash Bihari Lal. They rose to be prominent members of the Bihar Congress Socialist Party later. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, however, the kisan organizations did not concentrate on kisan grievances, but on the movement launched by Gandhi.

The kisan sabhas agitated against the illegal cesses, the practice of forced labour, and maltreatment meted out by zamindars and their agents to the kisans. In 1933, for the first time, the Bihar Kisan Sabha demanded for the ryots the right of transfer of their holdings, the right to cut trees in their lands, and repeal or restriction of enhancement of rents. In Southern Bihar, the evils of the *bhaoli* system of rent demand prevailed, according to which the rent was determined on the basis of the actual size of each harvest, a proportion (usually 50 per cent) of which was taken by the landlord. In certain areas, the standing crops were evaluated and rents fixed. The crop was not allowed to be removed from the fields till an agreement was reached between the landlord and the tenant. This method was known as *danabandi*.

These extremely irksome procedures for fixing rents led to frequent quarrels, and bitterness, between the zamindars' agents and the peasants. The Kisan Sabha rightly demanded that a suitable mechanism should be devised to arrive at a fair distribution of grain, and proper evaluation of crops to avoid disputes. These demands were put forward by Sahjanand and other activist Congressmen, many of whom joined the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934. The movement thereafter

turned into a class-oriented struggle, which asked for the abolition of the zamindari system. The CSP no doubt supplied a new life and vigour to the movement, which brought them into conflict with the landlords and later with the Congress ministry in Bihar in 1937-39. When the ministry passed the tenancy laws, which were, as Rajendra Prasad pointed out, based on 'mutual agreement and compromise', between the zamindars and kisan sabhas, they fell short of kisan expectations.³⁰

The Bihar Congress was not fired by the zeal or radicalism shown by Nehru and the UP Congress to initiate a social revolution. Most kisan leaders in Bihar, like Sahjanand Saraswati became disenchanted with the Congress. In 1941, Sahjanand came under the influence of the Communists and declared himself to be working for the 'exploited and suffering masses whose lot is connected with the cultivation and live by it'. Yet, in 1944, he observed that it was 'really the middle and big cultivators [who were] . . . for the most part with the kisan sabhas', the 'rural proletariat' having remained by and large out of the movement.³¹

In Bengal, the permanently settled area, where large landowners flourished, a few tenants associations had been formed around 1915 or so. Later Fazlul Haq established the Nikhil Banga Krishak Praja Samiti in 1929, for the redressal of the grievances of tenants but the movement for radical tenancy reforms gathered momentum only after 1934. A considerable number of zamindars supported the national movement. The Congress leadership, although sympathetic to the tenants' cause, did not take the initiative in launching a movement for the amelioration of the conditions of peasants in Bengal. In 1928, when the Tenancy Bill was being discussed by the Bengal Legislative Council, members of the Swaraj Party took a very conservative position. The tenancy law as passed by the legislature, however, failed to satisfy anybody; neither the peasant proprietors, nor the *jotedars* nor the landowners were happy with it. Subhas Chandra Bose, who was otherwise quite progressive in his views, also remained aloof. He seems to have agreed with the general view held around this time, that the most important issue facing the nation was independence and all other issues were secondary.³² Besides, around 1930, the terrorist and revolutionary activities had taken a heavy toll of the youth in Bengal, many of whom had close links with the Congress. The government had severely dealt with the revolutionary upsurge, weakening the movement and leaving the people of Bengal in a state of shock.

The success story of the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 was of tremendous significance in the tax resistance movement led by Sardar Patel. The Bardoli Taluqa comprising 137 villages covered an area of 222 square miles with a population of nearly 90,000. In 1927 the revenue settlement envisaged an increase of 22 per cent over the previous revenue demand,

which the peasants of Bardoli considered excessive and arbitrarily fixed. When months of petitions, demonstrations and protests organized under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel and the overall guidance of Mahatma Gandhi failed to move the government, a satyagraha was launched declaring that the revenue demand would not be paid and demanding that it should be withdrawn. Meanwhile, Gandhi had satisfied himself, through an independent enquiry made under his instructions, that the increase, indeed, was too heavy and inconsistent with prevailing conditions. The movement was so effective that the government had finally to withdraw the increased demand. *The Times of India* described the intensity of the movement and the organization, which lay behind it:

... a situation there that is unique in the history of the British administration of India, and one that must sooner or later result in bloodshed or abdication by Government in the Taluka. The leaders of the no-tax campaign have succeeded in producing such a complete paralysis of the machinery of Government in the Taluka that not a finger can be moved, not a person stirs out of his house without their knowledge and consent. Even the officers of Government themselves are practically dependent for supplies, conveyance, etc. upon the goodwill of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel and his 'volunteers'. . . . The power of the social boycott, the wide net of Mr Patel's followers and informers, the complete success that has hitherto attended the campaign and the utter helplessness of the Government has given to the people a vivid realization of their power [which will produce] a crisis that the country has rarely experienced.³³

The classic example of the no-tax movement of Bardoli and its success has been immortalized by Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary at that time, in a volume entitled *The Story of Bardoli : Being a History of the Bardoli Satyagraha and its Sequel* (Ahmedabad, 1929). Gandhi also spoke and wrote extensively about it and this has been fully documented in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. D.G. Tendulkar's eight-volume biography, *The Mahatma*, highlights this grim yet fascinating mass struggle launched under the Congress banner, which enthralled the country and built up a tremendous level of political anticipation and excitement.

The logical sequel to the Bardoli Satyagraha were Gandhi's famous Dandi March and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31. Many studies on these events have recently appeared. David Hardiman in his monograph, *Peasant Nationalism in Gujarat*,³⁴ and Dennis Dalton, in a series of articles, have dealt with the nature, content and spread of the movement and the organization which lay behind it, in great detail and depth. It is, therefore, not proposed here to go into details of these movements launched under the direct guidance of the Congress, with which those interested in the history of Indian nationalism are familiar.

It is pertinent here to note the striking similarities in the salient features of the Kheda Satyagraha, 1917-18; the Borsad Satyagraha, 1923-24; and the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928:

1. All of them were rural protest movements which developed into mass struggles against the British raj and its bureaucracy.
2. All of them were tax-resistance movements and were carried out through non-violent means.
3. The major components in the movements were drawn from all classes of peasantry, including poor peasants, the middle peasants dominating the scene and rich peasants willingly supporting the movements.
4. All three movements were eminently successful in achieving their avowed objectives.

The Kheda Satyagraha of 1917-18, launched under Gandhi's leadership, covered an area consisting of 510 villages, of which 70 were most prominent in refusing to pay their revenue to the government. The support came, to begin with, from the richer patidar villages and soon spread to poorer villages. Hardiman tells us that the leadership in these villages was taken mostly by the middle peasants. Some of them had only five acres of land and had been educated in village schools. However, the Patidars in general were prosperous and rich peasants like Ishwarbhai Patel, a leading nationalist, who organized the movement. Indulal Yagnik was another of the dedicated leaders of the area whose contribution was quite significant. The poorer peasants of subordinate castes were only marginally involved in the agitation, as pointed out by Hardiman. The bulk of the support for the satyagraha came from peasants who could afford to pay their revenue. It should be noted that Hardiman does not use the terms rich, middle and poor peasants, in Leninist terms. He rightly points out that such distinctions are superficial, except for the richer peasants. In his vocabulary, the poor peasant is not a rural labourer but a peasant with some land.

The Borsad Satyagraha was launched soon after the announcement of a punitive police tax in October 1923. In this satyagraha again, Vallabh-bhai Patel, Mohanlal Pandya and Ravishanker Maharaj, provided leadership. The Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee objected to the imposition of the police tax and voted, on 1 December 1923, to support the agitation. The organization of the no-tax campaign has been extremely well documented and highlighted by David Hardiman in his book. The police-tax was ultimately withdrawn on 7 January 1924 by the Bombay Government, which considered it to have been hastily imposed and without any justification. The tax had affected all classes of peasants and the movement against it was supported by all sections.

The victory of the Bardoli Satyagraha was equally impressive and people came to believe that satyagraha was the most effective tool, as advocated by Gandhi. David Hardiman sums up the achievement in the following words:

By 1929 the mood was not to trust the bureaucracy but to fight them at every turn. Peasants' satyagraha was seen as a most potent force: as a form of protest, it was considered to hold the key to swaraj. Once again, the peasants optimistically believed that the Congress leaders were allies in their struggle against the bureaucracy.³⁵

In some of the zamindari areas of Andhra Pradesh, around 1931, N.G. Ranga took the lead in forming peasants' associations. In the coastal belt of Andhra Pradesh and Madras, where the ryotwari system of settlement prevailed, the ryots (peasants) enjoyed ownership rights over land; the right of sale, mortgage and gift, and permanency of tenure were granted to them under the Act of 1908. Hence the agrarian problem in these areas was not as acute as in the zamindari area. In some of the ryotwari villages, where there were prosperous peasants, holding hundreds of acres of land, cultivation was carried out by tenants-at-will and labourers. Their conditions were far from satisfactory. N.G. Ranga put forward a demand for reduction of rent and security of tenure for tenants-at-will, at least for five years, and minimum wages for agricultural labour. In 1936-38, under the leadership of P. Sundarayya, the Andhra Communists tried to organize strikes of the rural poor and agricultural labourers in Nellore, Guntur, Krishna and Godavari Districts, but failed to draw them out. N.G. Ranga points out that their main aim was to split the peasant movement into two streams; one dominated by the middle peasants and the other by the rural labour.³⁶

N.G. Ranga's efforts in the Venkatgiri zamindari region met with some success. He formed the Zamindari Ryots Association in 1931 and held the Andhra State Zamindari Ryots Conference in Venkatgiri in 1931. Among the prominent Congressmen who attended the conference was Satyamurti, and other 'peasant-minded' Congressmen joined the kisan satyagraha launched in Venkatgiri. However, the Congress, as a party did not take part for the simple reason that it was not in a position to lead and control the movement in these areas. In 1936, Ranga wanted that the Congress should either adopt the kisan representatives, as suggested by his association, for the 1937 elections or permit them to fight independently, to which Jawaharlal Nehru did not agree. Clearly it was a question of party discipline and of accepting the leadership of the Congress organization. Hence, Nehru rightly rejected the proposal saying 'it is not desirable that any such candidate should run in opposition to Congress candidates'.³⁷

6. Civil Disobedience, Agrarian Unrest and No-Tax Campaign in UP

The Civil Disobedience Movement, launched under the banner of the Congress and led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a most militant yet non-violent mass movement, the like of which had never before been witnessed anywhere. It created a popular upsurge, unparalleled in its dimensions, in its emotive intensity, and the patriotic fervour it evoked among all classes and communities of the Indian people. The Congress was no more just a mass organization but was a movement itself. Lord Irwin described its epic dimensions to Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India:³⁸

All thinking Indians passionately want substantial advance which will give them power to manage their own affairs. However much they may deplore the Civil Disobedience Movement, they feel at heart that it is likely to make British opinion more elastic. . . . Student classes are of course ready sympathisers. . . . The movement thus obtains a wider measure of sympathy than many will be willing to accord to it on merits, and in Bombay the commercial classes, largely Gujarati have openly supported — and are said to be financing it. The masses in the towns are emotional, ignorant, prone to believe any rumours and accept any promises. The influence of Gandhi's name — though it varies in different parts — is powerful. . . . We think every European and Indian would tell you that he was surprised at the dimensions the movement has assumed, and we should delude ourselves, if we sought to underrate it. Appraisal of its constituent factors might be assessed thus:

Communist and Revolutionary	5%
Gandhi and declared and sincere Congress adherents	30%
General Nationalist sympathisers, ignorant masses and hireling volunteers	50%
Commercial and economic discontent	15%

This statement indicates that the movement not only encompassed the 'nationalist sympathisers', the 'masses', Congressmen of all levels, commercial interests, and shopkeepers, but also 'revolutionary' elements and 'sane and thinking' men, meaning thereby the educated and the moderates. The left and the right, all supported the movement though parties such as the Muslim League and the Communist Party remained aloof. Another 'unexpected' segment of Indian society which joined the movement in large numbers was women. The Government of India reported:³⁹

Thousands of them — many being of good family and high educational attainments suddenly emerged from the seclusion of their homes and in some instances actually from *purdah*, in order to join Congress demonstrations and assist the picketing, and their presence on these occasions made the work of the police particularly unpleasant.

Ample evidence exists to show that the Congress influence transcended all kinds of barriers — urban-rural, class-community, and religious.

In UP, Malcolm Hailey pointed out on 5 June 1930 that even the landlords could not be trusted: 'An astonishing number of our landowners etc. are really in a kind of way sympathisers with Congress and many who know them say quite confidently that a general attack on Congress as such would alienate them.'⁴⁰

On 2 May 1931, Hailey reported further that 'practically the whole population [was] behind them [the Congress]. There are two or three districts in Oudh and one or two in Agra in which the situation is really alarming.' He candidly stated that though the Congress had not so far resorted to a no-tax campaign, their popularity had grown tremendously in the rural areas and the 'collection of rents has entirely ceased', and 'we are doing our best to promote general meetings of Muslims against Civil Disobedience and to a certain extent landlords are beginning to take a real interest against the agitation.'⁴¹

Several steps were meanwhile taken to help the zamindars to organize against the Congress and the tenantry. Sham Sunder Dar, ICS, prompted the zamindars of Rai Bareilly to punish such tenants who were Congress activists and sympathizers by evicting them, for which they were promised government help.⁴² Subscriptions from zamindars for their associations were collected by district officers and collectors along with land revenue. This unity of action between the zamindars and the government was explained in terms of meeting the 'common danger'.⁴³ The tenantry of UP had full sympathy for the Congress cause. In Agra 75 to 80 per cent of tenants were occupancy ryots and, therefore, secure in their possessions and hereditary rights. The Nawab of Chhatari pointed out that most of them were with the Congress. In Oudh, the government had granted them security of tenure for life under the Oudh Tenancy Act of 1921, yet most of them felt impelled to join the movement. Malcolm Hailey observed that the Congress slogans in the countryside which had caught their imagination were 'Independence and Revolution'.⁴⁴

As a result of the world economic depression, agricultural prices began to fall in 1930 causing great distress to tenants and the peasantry in general. By August 1931, the Government of UP had granted remission of Rs 70 lakhs in land revenue and Rs 2.25 crores in rentals. But the Congress considered this a most meagre response to the crisis. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, a no-rent campaign was launched soon after, as a result of which, as Malcolm Hailey observed, the countryside experienced a 'general upheaval of economic and social conditions'.⁴⁵

It became necessary to adjust rents paid by the tenants to the depressed level of prices which were then prevalent. Considerable hardships were experienced by a large body of tenants who were unable to pay their dues to the taluqdars. Taking advantage of the fall in prices and the inability of the tenantry to pay rents, the taluqdars began ejecting them in large numbers. Alarming reports came in from all corners of UP. Coercive attachments and forcible collection of rents continued. Even in the Court of Ward's territory, which was under government control, the same thing happened. Graphic accounts of police raids on villages and atrocities perpetrated by the *ziladars* and the servants of the taluqdars were received from various quarters in the districts of Rai Bareli, Barabanki and Mathura. At places, the enraged tenants armed themselves. In Barabanki District, communal relations were strained since many Muslim taluqdars who supported the Muslim League had ruthlessly attempted to suppress the tenants. According to reports, some of the Congress workers who were also tenants in Barabanki, exhorted the tenants 'to wipe out' the zamindars, so that, if the Muslim zamindars were ruined, their property would be distributed among the kisans who were mostly Hindus. Altafur Rahman warned the Congress of the 'impending class and communal war'.⁴⁶

The critical agrarian situation in UP demanded the attention of the Indian National Congress soon after the Delhi settlement under which the Civil Disobedience Movement was suspended by Gandhi. Vallabhbhai Patel, the then President of the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru, the General Secretary of the AICC, exchanged a series of letters in this behalf with Malcolm Hailey, the Governor, and the Chief Secretary, Jagdish Prasad, on the one hand and the Viceroy and his Home Secretary, H.W. Emerson, on the other.⁴⁷

Jawaharlal Nehru and Purushottam Das Tandon, supported by local leaders like Mata Badal, went into the countryside organizing the tenants. The tenants gained in strength and it was with great difficulty that rent was being collected by the government. The chief secretary in fact complained that Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts to arouse the peasantry once again had a very 'detrimental effect on these districts'. The Congress had recently distributed a number of leaflets urging the tenants to send applications for the suspension of rents to the Congress. At Rai Bareli, a no-rent campaign had been vigorously launched. Congress panchayats were formed which dealt with the cases relating to rent and later approached the government for remission on behalf of the affected tenants. At some places, even criminal offences were tried by these panchayats, thus usurping the functions of the police and magistracy.

The Congress by its intervention in the rural areas soon emerged as a mediator between the government and the masses of tenants. By doing

so, the Congress was making a determined bid to share power with, if not actually capture power from, the government and also from the landed aristocracy. The Congress activities in the rural regions resulted in the erosion of government authority and influence and permanently damaged the position of landlords. During a series of discussions in July 1931 between Emerson and Gandhi, to find a solution for the problems of the UP peasants, Gandhi asked the government 'to associate the Congress with them and accept their advice as to what rent should be collected'.⁴⁸ This was a tactical move on the part of the Congress which wanted to be recognized as the only representative in the country of Indian public opinion. However, the fact remains that, as a result of discussions with the government and the powerful campaign in the countryside, considerable rent remissions were made. It was officially acknowledged that between August 1931 and the middle of 1933, rents amounting to Rs 964 lakhs and revenue of Rs 269.5 lakhs were remitted. This was no mean achievement on the part of the Congress.⁴⁹

During the no-tax campaign in UP, the Congress took the leadership entirely in its own hands. The Kisan Sabha leadership was brought totally under the pale of the Congress, unlike what had happened in Bihar. Jawaharlal Nehru's hold in the district organizations was complete and the volunteers implicitly followed the policy of resistance as adopted and commanded by the Congress. The organizational strength of the Congress in districts like Agra, Mathura, Allahabad and Rai Bareilly was impressive. In 1931, even in a backward district like Rai Bareilly, as many as 840 panchayats were formed with 13,000 active volunteers, mostly tenants and peasants, 32 Congress offices were opened and functioned and 996 villages hoisted the Congress flag and resisted its removal by the British. Numerous examples of the 'battle for the flag' in villages were reported by district officers.⁵⁰

Another significant but distressing development was the growth of communal passions in the wake of these agitations. In Allahabad District, where the no-rent campaign had made a significant impact, Muslim landlords, working under the guidance of the district collector, forced their tenants, specially the Muslim tenants, to pay rents. Hindu tenants who were mostly Congress supporters, began intimidating their Muslim co-tenants in an attempt to prevent them from paying rents and, as a consequence, there were violent clashes between Hindu and Muslim tenants. In Barabanki and Lucknow Districts, most of the Muslim taluqdars supported the Muslim League and the government, which complicated matters further, and evictions of tenants from their lands were carried out ruthlessly. Thus the communal tensions in these regions arose out of class tensions as well.⁵¹

7. Peasant Mobilization by the Congress — The Attitude of the Political Left

The emergence of the Congress as a mass organization having gained the support of the peasant classes in the 1920s and 30s, was a political reality of paramount importance which could hardly be denied. Yet, the radical left in India underestimated the achievement of the Congress. They argued that the main purpose of the Congress involving the masses in its activities was to gain political advantage and to pressurize the government to grant concessions. To an extent, there is truth in this view. The Congress was determined to wrest power from the British by organizing mass struggle against the imperialist power. This, by itself, was a most laudable objective and the radical parties should have recognized its significance in the colonial situation in which India was placed. The Indian National Congress, right from the beginning, declared in clear terms that socio-economic transformation could not be brought about unless the alien rule was overthrown. The left parties also criticized the Congress as a middle-class organization which had no intrinsic faith in radicalizing the countryside and the national movement. They pronounced rather a harsh judgement on Congress motivation, saying that the Congress was in fact a tool of the capitalist class and was interested in securing concessions only for them. They attacked Gandhiji as an arch reactionary and accused the Congress of serving 'the interests of the landed aristocracy and the capitalist classes'. Gandhiji also came in for sharp criticism for his action in withdrawing the Non-cooperation Movement in 1922, after the Chauri Chaura incident, and entering into what is called the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. They believed the main reason for stopping the movement at a most critical juncture, when the movement was reaching a climax, was essentially to prevent the movement from entering into a revolutionary phase. Even Nehru was not spared and was considered 'the most dangerous agent of compromising bourgeoisie'.⁵² Such criticisms, coming as they did at the most inopportune moment, when the whole country was geared to wage an all-out war in the form of the Civil Disobedience Movement against the British Raj, was most unfortunate. In fact, the Communist Party remained aloof from the movement at this critical juncture of the national struggle.

These criticisms stemmed from an ideological orientation derived from orthodox Marxism as well as from frustration born out of failure to draw the peasant masses into the pale of leftist influence. It must also be stressed that the orthodox Marxists could not grasp the complexity of the Indian rural ethos which received sustenance from religion, caste, family ties, and local and regional loyalties, and, as a result, their

assessment of the strength and character of the masses between 1920 and 1935 was far from realistic.

A closer examination of what prevented the left parties joining in the common struggle against the imperialist forces at this time helps in bringing out clearly, by way of contrast, the remarkable perceptiveness of the Congress viewpoint articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru, and to show that the Congress view of the prevailing social reality was more accurate than that of the leftists. Their failure to support the Congress movement weakened their very cause, viz., ending the exploitative relationship between the feudal classes and the peasant masses.

The intellectual foundations of this attitude can be traced back to M.N. Roy, who, as is well known, had posed a challenge to Lenin's thesis way back in 1922. Lenin had urged that the movement launched by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had revolutionary potential and had expressed the view that the Communist Party should lend support to the movement, if only to impart a revolutionary character to it. M.N. Roy did not agree with Lenin's view and stressed in his *India in Transition* that the national bourgeoisie represented by the Congress could not be a revolutionary force, since India was already within the orbit of the capitalist mode of production, and the national bourgeoisie in India had a stake in developing a relationship with the capitalist class in imperialist countries. According to him, only the working class could perform the function of initiating social revolution. Since it was emerging as a 'social force' in India, it should take up the political leadership of the anti-imperialist movement, the bourgeoisie being too spineless to spearhead the struggle. This view was shared and advocated by Rajni Palme Dutt in his work *India Today*, declaring that the Indian bourgeoisie, by its very nature, would be more hostile to social revolution than to British imperialism. On the basis of these assumptions, the Communist Party concluded that the Indian National Congress would be a counter-revolutionary force rather than the spearhead of the movement for national liberation.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had emerged as the most outstanding and most radical leader of the Indian National Congress by 1931, welcomed the ideological thrusts offered by Marxism. He was prepared to accept the support of left-oriented radicals and parties to prepare a common plan of action for a genuine social transformation, revolutionary in content, but non-violent and peaceful in its method. Unfortunately, these contacts did not lead to any lasting arrangement. The idea of a united front was mooted but was given up. Leftist policies in this period have been studied in depth by a group of scholars led by Bipan Chandra, in *The Indian Left, Critical Appraisals*.⁵³

Nehru was surprised and pained to find the Communists attacking Gandhi and the Congress and imputing 'all manner of base motives' to the Congress leaders. Although he was prepared to accept that 'many of their theoretical criticisms' of the Congress ideology may have been justified, he felt that the errors committed by these groups in not forging a joint front against the imperialist forces were based on a wrong understanding of the situation. He commented about these matters in his *Autobiography*.⁵⁴

The basic error seems to be that they [Communists] judge the Indian National Movement from European labour standards, and used as they are to the repeated betrayals of the labour movement by the labour leaders, they apply the analogy to India. The Indian National Movement is obviously not a labour or a proletarian movement. It is a *bourgeois* movement as its very name implies, and its objective so far has been, not a change of the social order, but political independence. This objective may be criticized as not far-reaching enough, and nationalism itself may be condemned as out of date but accepting the fundamental basis of the movement, it is absurd to say that the leaders betray the masses because they do not try to upset the land system or the capitalist system. They never claimed to do so. Some people in the Congress, and they are a growing number, want to change the land system and the capitalist system but they cannot speak in the name of the Congress.

It has been often argued that the Indian capitalist classes had greatly profited by the national movement because of the boycott of foreign goods, especially foreign cloth. But it was inevitable; the boycott of foreign goods was bound to increase the demand for swadeshi products, whether hand-made or mill-made in Indian markets. What is often ignored is, as pointed out by Nehru himself (*An Autobiography*, p. 367), that during the course of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Bombay Millowners' Association concluded a pact with Lancashire. This was quite obviously opposed to the ideology of the Congress movement. It is therefore absurd again to argue that the Indian National Congress stopped or suspended mass movements when they became too dangerous for Indian capitalists. The perceptions of the Communists were astonishingly simplistic. They did not even try to understand the significance of the nationalist mass upsurge led by the Congress.

In a most perceptive article, 'Peasants and Revolution',⁵⁵ Hamza Alavi, a Marxist intellectual, goes into this question in depth, and points out the basic weaknesses in the perceptions and assessment of the Indian left parties. He is candid enough to say that the CPI, following the orthodox Marxist line, was engaged in organizing the industrial working classes and gave hardly any attention to the important task of organizing the peasantry. Mittrany also pointed out in his classic work, *Marx and the*

Peasant, how, until the second decade of the 20th century, the Russian leaders did not consider the peasant capable of showing revolutionary fervour, and of lending all-out support to a socialist revolution. They followed the main Marxist tradition, taking a firm stand, that the industrial proletariat must play a dominant or even exclusive revolutionary role in the achievement of socialist revolution. The Indian Communists followed the Russian line implicitly.

The second blunder committed by the left radicals in India was born out of their belief that the only revolutionary element among the peasants was 'the poor peasantry' and the agricultural labourers, and not other classes of peasants. Following Lenin's example, they sought to classify the peasants in three categories: rich peasants, middle peasants, and poor peasants. The rich peasants were those who had substantial plots of land of their own, who partly cultivated them themselves, and employed landless tenants or labourers for production. The middle peasants were small holders of land, who cultivated themselves and were, by and large, self-sufficient. They did not exploit others' labour nor were they exploited. The poor peasants were composed of the rural labouring classes. Over and above these categories of peasants there were the landlords who rented out their lands and exploited the labour of the agricultural proletariat for production.

Alavi argues that the economic dependence and subordination of the poor peasantry and the economic independence of the middle peasant was crucial in the understanding of the village social order in India. The mechanical categorization of the peasantry into three classes, according to him, was unreal, since little evidence could be found in these categories of peasants of a distinct sense of class solidarity. The concept of class as propounded by Marx was 'a structural concept' which was based on production relations and not on differences of income. The exploited peasantry had not even emerged as a class, in his view; let alone merging into a 'class organization', capable of leading or even ready for a class struggle. Alavi further argues that it was the middle peasant who was likely to be most militant in the village order rather than the poor peasant. The failure of the Communists to organize the peasantry, therefore, could be explained in terms of their obsession with the poor peasantry.

It is important to remember at this juncture that the Indian National Congress, and particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, did not analyse the intricate class distinctions obtaining among the peasantry. Nehru also derived his ideological inspiration from Marx and the Russian Revolution, yet he had the perception and insight to realize that these class distinctions among the peasantry were not crucial in the Indian situation as far as the anti-imperialist struggle was concerned, and even for a social

revolution. He moved step by step. For him, the most important question between 1920 and 1931 was to work for the emancipation of the peasantry as a whole from the exactions of the landlords and give them security of tenure. In this programme, the interests of all peasant classes were taken care of.

It has often been held that the Indian National Congress was concerned with peasant proprietors only. But this was not so. Jawaharlal Nehru raised his powerful voice equally in favour of the dispossessed, deprived and oppressed sections of the peasantry. He did not differentiate between the rich, middle or poor peasant. Congress volunteers came from all these sections. His perceptions of the agrarian situation rested on his belief that there were mainly two classes in the village social order: the landed gentry and the peasantry. But he was conscious that only those peasants and tenants who were economically self-sufficient would come forward to support the movement and work for the programme for socio-economic improvement. It has been very rightly observed by a perceptive scholar, P.C. Joshi, that

From the vantage point of Marxism, Nehru was able to look beyond 19th century liberalism in general and capitalism in particular. He thus shows very clearly the futility of repeating the crust of western history in the third world. He emphasized the need for a new ideological base for the changing societies in Asia. He interpreted the emergence of Soviet civilization as a clear break from 19th century liberalism, as part of the search for a new type of social order based on economic and social justice. At the same time, Nehru could not identify himself with the violence, civil war and severe restrictions on liberty which became associated with the Stalinist alternative to western liberalism.⁵⁷

Joshi concluded:

A synthesis of the vital elements of liberalism with those of Marxism thus embodied an important aspect of Nehru's creative approach to modernity.⁵⁸

Nehru attempted to harmonize 'liberty with justice, on the one hand, and social revolution with non-violence, on the other.'⁵⁹ In 1929, the Comintern, under the guidance of Stalin, had asked the Communist Party not to co-operate with the Indian National Congress in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Indian Communists obeyed the Comintern dictates faithfully. Observant scholars have opined that these mistakes of the left parties cost them dearly. The fact remains that the bulk of the Congress support, even in the post-independence period, came from the peasant classes.

The Workers and Peasants Party (WPP) formed in 1926 was influenced, to a great extent, by the Russian Revolution and acknowledged

the Soviet leadership in the international Communist movement. The major tasks of the Workers and Peasants Party, as stated in their party manifesto, were 'to penetrate peasant organizations wherever they existed as genuinely mass organizations; to correctly formulate the agrarian question in the ranks of the working class, to explain to them the importance of the decisive role of agrarian revolution, and to acquaint them with the method of agitation, propaganda and organizational work among the peasantry.' The peasants thus had a subordinate role to play and were included in the movement for tactical reasons, rather than to build a genuine peasant organization or class organization of the peasantry with a view to initiating a social revolution in the country. D.N. Dhanagare in his extremely insightful article, 'Politics of Survival',⁶⁰ observes that the leaders of the Workers and Peasants Party failed to explore the revolutionary potential at the grass-roots level. Besides, not a single peasant leader was included in the WPP. Like Alavi, Dhanagare is also categorical in his view that the WPP was concerned with the working class movement rather than the peasantry, since they drew heavily on classical Marxism and Leninism. During the Bardoli satyagraha, the WPP remained aloof from it, considering that the agitation was conducted by the rich and prosperous patidars, which was not wholly true. There was considerable confusion among the WPP leadership regarding their objective in respect of restructuring of rural relations. For example, while, on the one hand, they asked for nationalization of land, on the other, they promised to establish peasant proprietorship. Since their attitudes on basic issues were inconsistent, and often contradictory, they remained isolated from the mainstream of the peasant movement as well as from the struggle for national freedom. According to Dhanagare:⁶¹

For all practical purposes W.P.P. were given a quiet burial and consequently the Communists lost whatever little contact they had with the villages although they were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of mobilizing the agricultural proletariat, poor peasants and the landless labourers.

The All India Kisan Sabha, of which the CPI was a dominant constituent, was founded in 1936. Other constituents of the sabha included some which had linkages with the Congress Socialist Party, N.G. Ranga's Zamindari Ryots Association of Andhra Pradesh, and Swami Sahajanand's Bihar Kisan Sabha. Constituted, as the All India Kisan Sabha was, of different groups, differences among the leaders surfaced right from the start and the CPI failed to formulate a common programme of action to tackle the agrarian problem. The All India Kisan Sabha soon passed out of the pale of CPI influence during the Second World

War, when the CPI supported the British, declaring that a 'people's war' was being fought against fascism.

8. The Evolution of Congress Agrarian Policy

The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed in 1934 by a group of intellectuals who aimed at radicalizing the Indian National Congress and were determined to initiate a process which would ultimately lead to the establishment of a socialist society. They rightly believed that the Indian National Congress was in a position to usher in a social revolution at that stage, especially when Jawaharlal Nehru had emerged as a foremost radical inside the Congress. The CSP was not a political party in the traditional sense; it was neither a separate political party, nor did it function as one. It acted more as a ginger group in the Indian National Congress; and its membership was open only to Congressmen. Later, however, when the CPI was banned, some of the left intellectuals joined the CSP group and the Indian National Congress.

By 1936, the Congress Socialist Party had become a force to reckon with. Jawaharlal Nehru had included three CSP members in his working Committee — Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deva and Achyut Patwardhan. In his presidential address at Lucknow in 1936, Nehru spoke almost the language of revolution and suggested that representation of workers' and peasants' organizations should be included in Congress committees. These suggestions no doubt tended to alarm the right-wing elements in the Congress, which were quite powerful indeed and had considerable hold in the central bodies and provincial committees of the Congress. There is no doubt that the rightists in the Congress continued to project the view that 'the Congress claims to represent equally all communities composing the Indian Nation',⁶² which of course was true enough as far as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, and depressed classes were concerned; yet the same argument was extended further to include the landed interests, as in the case of the Bihar Congress. It should be stressed here that several landowners and wealthy *raises* were avowed socialists. The names of Sri Prakasa and Tassaduq Sherwani, along with several others, were staunch supporters and leaders of the Congress. Many welcomed the agrarian programme resolution, drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru and Purushottamdas Tandon, which proposed the abolition of zamindari, a 50 per cent reduction in rent and a moratorium on all agricultural debts. The resolution was hotly debated and later had to be modified, leaving it finally to the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee to look into the question in a comprehensive manner. Similarly, the suggestion to include representatives of workers' and peasants' organizations in Congress committees was also watered down and a sub-committee formed

consisting of Rajendra Prasad, Jayaprakash Narayan and Jairamdas Daulatram to devise means to 'develop close association' with peasant organizations.⁶³

That the Congress began speaking with two conflicting voices on the agrarian question, particularly around 1936, shows a strong cleavage among the leadership. In Bihar, these differences became acute, and the radical left, including the Congress Socialist Party, led militant agitations in the countryside, outside the Congress organization. In UP, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sri Prakasa and Tandon, the movement continued to be left-oriented, though they insisted on following the path of non-violence to achieve their objectives. This is a subject which will be discussed further when we examine the Gandhian philosophy of trusteeship and social harmony. In spite of legitimate scepticism shown by the left-oriented leaders, both inside the Congress and outside it, it must be observed that the Congress appeal for the unity of all classes and interests was not as hollow as it is sometimes made out to be. Malcolm Hailey observed that many landlords in UP were not in the least 'anti-revolutionary' and mentioned 'one or two of our landlords, whose attitude is as dangerous as that of any tenants; it is more dangerous indeed because of the position which they hold'.⁶⁴

With the growth of the mass contact programme among the Muslims launched by the Congress around this period, Jinnah warned the Congress to 'leave the Muslims alone'. In fact, the problem in UP had become quite complex and had begun taking on communal overtones since 1931, since a large number of landholders and taluqdars in UP were Muslims, who were alarmed by the espousal of the tenants' cause by the Congress, and Jawaharlal Nehru's open declaration that the ultimate destiny of India was to form not only a democratic state but also a socialist one. The landlords, both Hindu and Muslim, felt threatened. In 1937, when Jawaharlal Nehru declared that, in the final analysis, 'there are only two forces in India today — British Imperialism and the Congress — representing Indian nationalism', Jinnah retorted: 'I refuse to line up with the Congress. I refuse to accept the proposition. There is the third party in this country and this is Muslim India'⁶⁵ These were ominous enough developments and it would be worthwhile examining whether the call of socialism and the proposal to abolish zamindari made any impact on Hindu-Muslim relations. Nehru considered the Muslim League a party of obscurantist upper-class and landed interests. Jinnah also once characterized the Muslim League as consisting 'mostly of big landlords, title-holders and selfish people who looked to their class and personal interests more than to the communal and national interests and who had always been ready to sacrifice them to suit British policies.' (Jinnah to Khaliquzzaman, February 1936.)⁶⁶

These questions of vital importance, unless resolved in proper perspective, could lead to a Hindu-Muslim divide. Jawaharlal Nehru hoped that communalism, which arose essentially out of fear and economic inequalities, would dissolve itself in the wake of rapid economic progress, so that the deprived sections, of all communities, could have a legitimate share in the prosperity thus created in the country.

The CSP programme, adopted at its formation in 1934, was radical enough. But it was not clear how the CSP would achieve these objectives. Some of the important items of its programme were:

1. Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
2. Development of economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state.
3. Socialization of the key and principal industries.
4. State Monopoly of foreign trade.
5. Elimination of princes and landlords without compensation.
6. Redistribution of land to peasants.
7. Liquidation of debts of peasants and workers.
8. Encouragement to be given to co-operative and collective farming.
9. Adult franchise on a functional basis etc.
10. Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the state.

The strategy to achieve these objectives was not spelt out. For one thing, the Congress itself was divided on these issues. Sardar Patel described the socialists as suffering from brain fever, and other eminent leaders of the Congress like Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Pat-
tabhi Sitaramayya, had little sympathy for this ambitious programme. They were also opposed to any policy which threatened to produce even a semblance of class conflict. The Congress, as a body, had declared its foremost priority to be getting rid of British rule by forging a united front of all interests and communities. It is also to be stressed that the bourgeoisie was very powerful, and was sympathetic to the nationalist cause and aspirations. Under the patronage and influence of the British they could easily be weaned away, and another powerful front opposed to nationalism could have been created. Under the circumstances, it was argued that the nationalist movement would have suffered a setback had the Congress adopted the radical programme of the CSP. In the colonial setting, the CSP programme seemed unworkable, unless one was prepared to follow the path of class struggle, irrespective of whether India achieved its goal of freedom from alien rule or not.

The Congress agrarian programme adopted at its Lucknow session in April 1936 was, therefore, more realistic and in conformity with its avowed ideology of avoiding a class conflict; at the same time, it stood for the amelioration of the lot of the peasantry. The programme defined

its objectives as emancipation of peasants from feudal and semi-feudal burdens and levies; safeguarding the interests of the peasantry where intermediaries operated; just and fair relief to be given to peasants in respect of agricultural indebtedness, including arrears of revenue and rent; substantial reduction of rents and revenue demand; opening of industries to relieve rural unemployment; allocation of funds for social, economic and cultural uplift of villages; and freedom of organization of agricultural labourers and peasants. This seemingly innocuous programme, as compared with the programme of the CSP or the CPI which even boasted of organizing 'armed insurrections', were most logical, viewed against the colonial background in which India was placed.

Nehru had the foresight, vision and courage to suggest many changes in Marxist social theory. He did not compromise as far as his anti-feudal stance was concerned, but he believed that the future ought to be built, giving full rights to the peasants and without dislodging the peasant proprietors of all kinds. He said:

It hardly seems a matter of argument that this semi-feudal system is out of date and is a great hindrance to production and general progress. It conflicts even with a developing capitalism, and almost all over the world large landed estates have gradually vanished and given place to peasant proprietors.⁶⁷

He further said:

I do believe that the philosophy of Communism helps us to understand and analyse existing conditions in any country and further indicates the road to future progress. But it is doing violence and injustice to that philosophy to apply it blindfold without due regard to facts and conditions.⁶⁸

He differentiated between the European and Indian situations and decided to plan according to Indian needs. For him, in India, 'Nationalism and rural economy are the dominating considerations and European socialism seldom deals with these.'⁶⁹

9. The Attitude of the Congress towards the Landed Classes

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that landlordism was a relic of the past feudal structure and should be done away with. He forcefully drove home the point in the following words:⁷⁰

Regarding zamindars and talukdars I should like to make the position of the Congress as well as myself quite clear. The Congress stands for the removal of the hardships of the masses and the masses being chiefly the peasantry the Congress has to stand for their interests. The Congress is not

against the zamindars as such but where there is a conflict between the two interests, the interest of the masses must prevail. That is, so far as I have been able to understand the Congress viewpoint. My personal viewpoint is the same but in addition I am convinced that the zamindari system is a system which is injurious to society. This opinion has nothing to do with the good zamindars or bad zamindars and talukdars. It is based on purely economic reasons. Further I am convinced that this system is utterly divorced from modern conditions and is bound to topple over because of its inherent instability.

Jawaharlal Nehru thought that, so long as colonialism and feudalism persisted in India, the agrarian problems would continue to plague the countryside and no progress whatsoever would be made. H.W. Emerson, the Home Member of the Government of India, records that Nehru, during the course of his discussions with him on 19 July 1931, candidly expressed his deep commitment to initiating radical changes in socio-economic relations, once the Congress gained power. Even at a time when the Congress was not in power, Nehru toyed with the idea of purchasing estates of landlords and redistributing them among peasants. Emerson recorded:⁷¹

One of his [Nehru's] schemes was, I gathered, to buy out the big landlords in the UP and redistribute their estates. He disclaimed any idea of confiscation but I fancy his idea of compensation will not tally with those of the landlords. Possibly he has at the back of his mind that a period of acute agrarian depression is a good time for land purchase by the State.

Although Nehru believed in the inherent weaknesses and incompatibilities of landlordism he was not in favour of solving the problem by initiating a class war or 'by means of a peasant revolt'. His commitment to democratic values and freedom was so strong that he sought to introduce measures for radical social transformation only by using non-violent, peaceful methods, and in gradual stages. He was also deeply conscious of the constraints imposed on the Indian social system under colonial rule. Delivering his presidential address⁷² at the Faizpur Congress on 27 December 1936 he said, 'The Congress stands today for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills.' Thus, his priorities were clear. He wanted first to get rid of the foreign power and, within the framework of a democratic constitution, he wanted to introduce a system which would work ultimately for the establishment of socialism. In the same address, he also pointed out how the alien government proved a great hindrance to social progress and that no

social reform could be introduced unless British rule was ended. In fact, he said that even if one had to sell soap in the country, the Congress had to take note of the interference of the government, if it did not suit their economic interest. Jawaharlal Nehru gave expression to the basic formulations as conceived and articulated by him in the message he gave to the nation on 27 December 1936,⁷³ on the eve of the Faizpur Congress session:

When we consider the problem of India we find that essentially it is a problem of removing poverty and unemployment, and the building up of a new political and social order which removes all obstacles and hindrances from the path of freedom and progress. This removal involves political freedom, for without the power to shape our destiny we are helpless victims of external forces which keep us down and exploit us. Political freedom thus becomes the primary objective without which we cannot advance materially in any direction. But behind this lies the real urge, the urgent necessity and desire to solve our problems of poverty and unemployment, to raise the standards of our millions, to remove illiteracy, to build up our industries, to get out of the iron grip of vested interests and to rid India of the numerous ills which inevitably follow foreign domination.

Arguing in favour of the peasantry, Nehru was absolutely clear that the zamindari system was most detrimental to the interest of peasants:

Land is considered to be the property of the zamindars. The zamindar does not work on his land but enjoys its fruits sitting at home. He gives his land to the peasants on rent and is always on the look out for extracting as much rent as he possibly can. It is my belief that the land should belong to the person who tills it and not to the zamindar or talukdar. . . . We should also try to have Swaraj in our country — not of the capitalist but of the poor and the peasants. . . . The present-day zamindars and talukdars are in fact a burden on the country.⁷⁴

In other words, Nehru was not merely engrossed in problems of reduction of rent and legislation against eviction of tenants from their land but he was also convinced that the socio-economic system which was based on a feudal structure had no right to exist. Ideologically, therefore, he was determined to sweep off the landlords as a class, which he considered to be an essential condition for the removal of mass misery and poverty. This, however, had to wait till India achieved freedom. It must be said to the credit of Jawaharlal Nehru that as the first Prime Minister of independent India, he redeemed the pledge in no small a measure.

Gandhi was not in sympathy with socialist ideology, which laid stress on the extinction of private property and the inevitability of class war. He expressed serious misgivings concerning the efficacy of a social

transformation brought about by an expropriation of property, and achieved by engineering social conflict and violence. Jawaharlal Nehru has recorded at length his differences with Gandhi on this vital issue, although Nehru was also not in the least enamoured of class conflict and violent methods to resolve it. Socialism was an article of faith for Nehru, but he hoped that a socialist society could be built without violence, through peaceful means, through laws. He did not believe in doctrinaire socialism and aimed at establishing an egalitarian society based on social justice and economic equality. Of course, such a society presupposed an overthrow of feudalism, a destruction of privileges of all kinds and a guarantee of equal rights and freedom to all. Nehru often remarked that his views were his own, and not of the Congress and that his views were far ahead of his times.

The sources of Gandhi's idealism, social values and beliefs can be traced to the highest Hindu philosophical traditions. He dreamt of building a new social order based on concepts of non-possession, non-violence in action, and duty. He considered the universe as the kingdom of God, in which all beings, animate and inanimate, were part and parcel of the cosmic system and all individuals had equal rights to attain material, moral and spiritual happiness. He extolled the virtues of love, piety, austerity and charity; and of *brahmacharya*, i.e. a belief in the negation of sexual indulgence — sex being primarily a means for procreation, to sustain the universe — and the *varnashram* system; all of which, no doubt, were in conformity with the ideals of the Hindu way of life. The social transformation which he envisaged, and the society which he sought to build, was a kind of society in which the individual would have full liberty and opportunity to attain moral and spiritual heights, by leading a simple life, with the minimum of desires and wants, with the bare necessities of life sufficient to maintain the body and soul. The ideal society of his dreams was one in which, neither the rich acquired too much wealth nor the poor lived in misery. In such a society there was no place for acquisitiveness or exploitative relationships. He, therefore, exhorted the virtues of religion and idealized the simple peasant life.

Jawaharlal Nehru considered that such a society, which perpetuated poverty, would be based on an 'utterly wrong and harmful doctrine'.⁷⁵ He was critical of Gandhi and observed that, 'He [Gandhi] has also no desire to raise the standard of the masses beyond a certain very modest competence for higher standards and leisure may lead to self-indulgence and sin.'⁷⁶

Gandhi denounced the western industrial society because of its acquisitiveness, fierce competition, unbridled consumerism and the domination of machine over man. In his classic work, *Hind Swaraj*,

published in 1909 and reprinted in 1938, after having been proscribed by the British Government, the metaphysical elements of his thought, blended with his simple social theory, emerge in sharp contrast to the ideas propounded by western social philosophers, who extolled the virtues of modern science, rationalism and technological innovations which were designed to promote the material welfare of the society. Jawaharlal Nehru's one ambition was to eliminate the poverty and misery of the toiling masses, particularly in the villages. Nehru called villages nothing but 'dung heaps' and wanted to transform them through science, technology and an agricultural and industrial revolution. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed in the philosophy of self-sufficient village republics; the village in which he saw, as it were, a spark of divinity still preserved in its remote recesses.

These philosophical interpretations of the human situation, human life, and its needs, were evolved through the ages in India and Gandhi derived inspiration from them. However, it should not be concluded that Gandhi was an anachronism, and that his philosophy was totally unsuited to the fast-changing society or that he was impervious to modern changes and needs. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was a critique of the west, and it should be stressed that he was not an inveterate enemy of science and rationalism. He was opposed to what he called enslavement of man to machine. Similarly, the modern radical, Jawaharlal Nehru, did not wish to impose a classless society on India through violence, as had been achieved in Russia, nor was he in favour of a rationalistic social order which was devoid of spiritualism. He aimed at establishing 'a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organized on a planned basis for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultural levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values, of co-operation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, good-will and love — ultimately a world order.'⁷⁷ Thus, in spite of a seeming polarity of views between Gandhi and Nehru, there were marked similarities in their attitudes.

Returning to the issue of socialism, however, Gandhi as well as many outstanding leaders of the Congress differed with Nehru; in fact Congressmen were divided on this issue as well as on the means to achieve the objectives. A considerable bulk among them professed themselves openly against a socialistic social order. Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari were among the stalwarts who voiced such disagreements.

Gandhi looked at the Congress as a party representing the whole of India and all classes of people. He said:

I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men. It belongs to all; but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms

the bulk of population must be its primary interest. The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor. But that does not mean that all other classes — the middle-classes, the capitalists or zamindars — must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subscribe to the interests of the poor.

He further added:⁷⁸ 'To me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice.' Again: 'Let there be no mistake as to what Purna Swaraj means to the Congress. It is full economic freedom for the toiling millions. It is no unholy alliance with any interest for their exploitation.' Gandhi believed in conversion, change of heart, as an instrument to bring about social transformation. He advocated the principle of the trusteeship of property in which the feudal princes, the capitalists, the big landlords, were expected to do their duty to the poor and the needy. He told the zamindars: 'My objective is to reach your heart and convert you so that you hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare.'

He opposed all forms of exploitation, and suggested the panacea of non-possession to end the exploitative relationship subsisting in the society. 'The principle of non-possession necessitates complete abstinence from exploitation in any form.' 'Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts.' Furthermore, 'In non-violent Swaraj, there can be no encroachment upon just rights; contrariwise no one can possess unjust rights.' He further observed, 'I never said that there should be co-operation between the exploiter and the exploited so long as exploitation and will to exploit persist.'

These ideas were no doubt of seminal importance, but they were highly complex, philosophical and seemingly opposed to normal human instincts. These ideas propounded by Gandhi were no doubt difficult of achievement. Gandhi as a man of religion and God viewed society entirely from a different plane. Nehru once remarked that he sometimes appeared more like a 'medieval Christian saint' than a modern social philosopher and a pragmatic political activist, who had succeeded in arousing the nation to a high pitch of activity and had posed a most powerful threat to British power in India. Nehru's scepticism, however, persisted: 'It is an illusion to imagine that a dominant imperialist power will give up its domination over a country, or that a class will give up its superior position and privileges unless effective pressure amounting to coercion is exercised.'⁷⁹ Gandhi, on the other hand, insisted that 'class war is foreign to the essential genius of India', and '... you may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing class war'. It was impossible to move Gandhi from the stand which he had taken, and it was natural and sensible that Jawaharlal Nehru did not

force the issue. It was more important that the Indian National Congress as a united party should lead the nation at that critical juncture than split on an issue which, in any case, could not have been solved till India had achieved freedom from alien rule.

If Gandhi derived his inspiration, faith and value-system from Hindu philosophy and religion, it should be stressed that he was also influenced by the teachings of the great religions of the world. If, on the one hand, he was a nationalist, on the other he was an ardent humanist, having an abiding faith in the concept that the entire humanity was one entity. Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru, as an internationalist, believed in building a new world order on the foundations of international understanding, peace, equality, and humanism; at the same time, he was a staunch nationalist, rooted in Indian culture. Although the western radical social theory, including Marxism, opened up new vistas of knowledge and ideas before him, he was deeply committed to Indian values, Indian culture and its heritage. It was not mere accident that his intellectual sensibilities led him to explore the Indian past in his famous book, *The Discovery of India*. He asked a fundamental question, 'What is my inheritance?' and sought an answer by delving deep into Indian culture and philosophy, as reflected in highly sophisticated religious doctrines, and the wealth of literature produced during the several millenia of Indian history. Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of social transformation impelled him to work out a synthesis between the best elements of Indian culture and the best of the West. It is against this background that his ideas and concepts should be considered. Whether it was the agrarian question or economic planning or framing of the Indian constitution or passing of social legislation, he never lost sight of India's history and heritage. With the dawn of independence, the zamindaris were abolished, but as an Indian and a humanist, he allowed the zamindars fair compensation. Considering that the peasants were the backbone of agrarian economy of India, they were made owners of the agricultural land they possessed with a ceiling placed on it, and all disabilities from which they had suffered were removed, thus laying a foundation of a silent and peaceful revolution in the Indian countryside.

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 72. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 7, p. 604; the address, pp. 598-617.
 73. Ibid., p. 597.
 74. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 5, p. 179.
 75. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 510.
 76. Ibid., p. 516.

77. Ibid., pp. 551-2.

78. See for these quotes, N.K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad, 1957).

79. *An Autobiography*, p. 544.

Chapter VIII

The Congress and the Industrial Question (1919-1935)

Dwijendra Tripathi

1. The Rise of the Indian Industrial Bourgeoisie

ONE OF THE by-products of the British rule, wholly unintended by the rulers, was the rise of an industrial bourgeoisie in India. With the growth of secular education and spread of western ideas, the religious dogmas and superstitious beliefs beat a defensive retreat, and the infra-structural changes of far-reaching consequence expanded the size of the market. The activities of British entrepreneurs in India at the same time pointed to new business opportunities, and India's link with the British Empire, then the paramount industrial power in the world, brought it face to face with a superior technology with the guarantee that trained manpower to handle the new machines would be available in plenty. The cumulative effect of all these factors, was the beginning of factory industry around the middle of the 19th century. In spite of the unhelpful attitude of an imperial regime, wedded to *laissez faire* principles very popular among British economists and policy makers in the 19th century, the number of Indian industrial establishments registered a successive rise up to the end of the First World War.¹

It is one of the ironies of history that the burgeoning Indian entrepreneurial spirit manifested itself most tellingly in the realm of textile manufacturing. Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, during which period the Indian cotton textile industry gained maturity, English manufacturers looked upon this field as their exclusive preserve and frowned on any encroachment on their near-monopolistic position. It is an interesting question to examine how a backward colony, unaccustomed to modern manufacturing processes, succeeded in establishing its own industry largely under Indian management and with Indian capital, and eventually wrested a major part of the domestic market from the hands of the 'mother country' in the face of subtle and very often open hostility of the English producers, who enjoyed powerful political leverage. The phenomenon cannot be explained with reference

simply to the easy availability of essential inputs, such as raw material and labour, or the existence of a vast domestic market alone, as has been done by some scholars,² but this is not the occasion to go into this question. What is important is that, by 1919, the share of Manchester in India's domestic consumption had declined to less than 40 per cent and the Indian mills had already demonstrated their capacity to capture external markets.

The early founders of cotton mills in India were invariably those who had been influenced by the demonstration effect of British entrepreneurs or had imbibed western ideas, in whatsoever limited measure, through their direct or indirect interaction with the ruling class. But once the viability of new industrial ventures was firmly established, traditional mercantile communities, engaged primarily in trading and moneylending till then, moved into the new fields with utmost vigour and established their domination on the industrial scene. Most of the later entrants too had come in under a spirit of reform and liberalism that was injecting a new ethos into the Indian society. Appreciation rather than hostility was the distinguishing feature of the attitude of these Indian industrialists towards the British rule and British business methods. This appreciation was so deeply entrenched that not even the imposition of excise duty upon the indigenous production of cotton goods in 1894 — a measure intended to placate the powerful Manchester lobby — generated any vigorous protest from the Indian mill magnates.³

The success of Indian entrepreneurship in other areas of industrial activities was not equally spectacular. It is somewhat strange that jute manufacturing, which began in India around the same time as cotton manufacturing, did not attract Indian investors even though raw materials and cheap labour were available in plenty, and the cost of setting up a jute mill was not prohibitive. Perhaps the Bengali entrepreneurs, who had burnt their fingers in a series of unsuccessful modern ventures between 1830 and 1850,⁴ were too shy to grasp the opportunity when the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854-56) sounded the deathknell of the Scottish jute industry and created a favourable climate for jute manufacturing in India. Marwari capital, concentrated in Eastern India, was still steeped in moneylending, thanks to highly favourable rates of interest, and the entrepreneurs in other parts of the country were either too busy exploiting opportunities nearer home or were put off by the sheer distance between the source of raw material and their own regions at a time when the transport facilities in the country were still quite primitive. Whatever the reasons, jute textiles became almost an exclusive preserve of foreign interests whose monopolistic ring was further fortified by the establishment of the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), a

cartel-type organization which barred the entry of Indians with remarkable success. This served to eliminate the Indians from some other fields as well, such as coal mining, steam shipping and inland navigation as the European managing agencies controlling the jute mills also controlled most of the companies in these sectors and exercised considerable influence on the railway companies which were the main users of coal.

Free imports on the one hand, and limited demand on the other for other consumer items, such as glass, paper, sugar, and matches, inhibited Indian initiative in these fields. Tea and coffee plantation developed and remained in the hands of foreign interests because of their easy access to international markets which were the main consumers of these articles; and input industries such as basic chemicals had no chance to develop as long as the industrial base was as narrow as it was in the 19th century. Besides cotton textiles, therefore, the only other area which attracted Indian entrepreneurship was steel manufacturing. But here too, J.N. Tata's initiative took a long time to fructify and remained an isolated, almost solitary, example of the Indian investment in a basic capital-intensive industry, involving a great deal of risk and a long gestation period.⁵

This industrial scenario which prevailed in India up to the end of the 19th century offered little possibility of conflict between the Indian and non-Indian interests. Their respective areas of operation were, by and large, separate and the room for direct competition between them was limited indeed. Reinforcing this economic reality was the hangover of the attitude that the Indian mercantile classes had had towards British businessmen in India during the early phase of the Indo-British economic interaction. The Indians, by and large, had acted as collaborators and compradors to the alien interests well up to the middle of the 19th century. The Parsis were the most active in providing critical support to British merchants in India,⁶ but the role of other Indian communities — such as Gujarati banias, Jains, Bhatias, Khattris and Marwaris — was no less significant. Nothing happened in the latter half of the 19th century to disturb the general harmony that had marked the relationship between the two groups in the earlier period. The Indian industrialists thus acquiesced in, if not appreciated, the British ruling presence, and accepted their British counterparts operating in India as partners rather than competitors in industrial activities. Admittedly, there were occasional whisperings advocating the use of indigenous products⁷ but generally speaking they related to the goods produced by artisans rather than factories. And in the absence of any meaningful support from the objective conditions prevailing at that time, these pleas proved too feeble to cause major ripples in the placid waters of Indo-British cordiality in the realm of business.

The attitude of the Indian industrialists, it must be stressed, towards the British entrepreneurs in India was more or less in tune with the attitude of the informed section of the Indian population towards the British rule and British institutions in the post-1857 period. The bitterness and disappointment caused by the suppression of the revolt soon yielded place to a general appreciation of the imperial regime on the part of the emerging middle class either because of a feeling of helplessness or the policy of reconciliation adopted by the Crown Government, as symbolized in the Queen's proclamation of 1858. It is significant that the prominent pioneers of the nationalist school in Hindi poetry, writing in the decades which followed the uprising, sang the praise of Queen's regime⁸ — and the Hindi heartland had been the principal scene of the revolt. It is also worth recalling that publicists like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, and Romesh Chandra Dutt, who voiced Indian economic grievances so eloquently, were not opponents of the British rule as such,⁹ and the Indian National Congress which comprised the educated elite functioned more as a pressure group, or at best Her Majesty's loyal opposition, rather than an anti-imperialist platform.¹⁰ Sporadic and occasional uprisings there were but they were provoked by local grievances; to regard them as the manifestation of general antipathy towards the Crown Government would be a misreading of history. Racial biases in various administrative measures affecting the Indian economy undeniably existed¹¹ but they were yet to cause a serious disillusionment among the political or economic elite in the country.

Lord Curzon's ill-conceived measure to divide Bengal in 1905 was perhaps the first significant act of the imperial regime which created serious doubt about the bona fides of the British intentions. Unfortunately for the empire, it came at a time when a small but powerful section of the Indian National Congress led by Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Bombay, was trying to recast the organization into a more militant mould. The Moderates in the Congress, who controlled the organization, had to react to Curzon's folly more stridently in the face of the rising Extremist challenge than they might have done otherwise. The result was that the call to boycott foreign goods and patronize *swadeshi* (indigenous products) became a general battlecry against the government move. But India was not in a position to supply most of the industrial products needed in the country, since cotton textiles was the only industry which was in a position to meet the excess demand created by the boycott. As the Indian market for Manchester cloth remained depressed the production capacity of the older establishments were expanded and a number of new mills were floated. In doing so, however, the millowners were

swayed by the pulls of demand rather than of the nationalist appeal. In fact, the Bombay mill industry seems to have taken undue advantage of the scarcity to raise the price of certain varieties of goods during the crisis — much to the chagrin of nationalist leadership.¹²

The swadeshi wave, however, proved too transitory to expand the popular base of the Congress, or to radicalize it. It also made little dent on the traditional attitude of the Indian industrialists towards British rule. Neither those who were active in the Congress organization, and their number was legion, nor those who maintained a discrete distance from it, lost any of their goodwill and support for India's imperial connection. There is no gainsaying the fact, however, that the swadeshi movement created a closer bond between the Congress and the cotton manufacturers, who benefited considerably from it, and the promoters of other industries such as the House of the Tatas whose steel venture would have otherwise been starved of funds. To cement this bond, as it were, the Congress continued to reiterate its support for swadeshi even after the movement had lost its élan following the annulment of the partition in 1911, and to oppose measures such as the cotton excise duties which militated against the interest of the Indian industrialist. The attitudes of Congress and the emergent industrial bourgeoisie towards the alien rule, thus, seemed to converge.¹³

Below the surface, however, the gulf between the Indian industrial elite and the empire was widening. This can be attributed to three major factors. As the racial discrimination against the Indians continued, overtly or covertly, even after the 1857 holocaust, the hopes that the new imperial order would accord a more equitable treatment to the Indians receded into the background. Secondly, as the opportunities for industrial ventures increased thanks to salutary infrastructural changes, the social base of the Indian industrial class continued to expand, with the result that the people who had little memory of the comprador role of their forefathers or no direct experience of it emerged on the Indian industrial front. Some of them, like Laxmanrao Kirloskar, had been the victim of racial biases, and some others, like Walchand Hirachand, had been influenced by nationalist writings during the impressionable phase of their career.¹⁴ And thirdly, with the gradual accretion in indigenous technical competence to handle modern manufacturing processes, the Indian industrialists were no more overly dependent on English technicians to help them carry on their operations. It is significant that while, in the initial phases of industrialization, English engineers occupied critical positions in every establishment, by the close of the 19th century, 'Indians had outnumbered Englishmen in almost every category of the higher posts of departmental heads' in the cotton mills of India.¹⁵ That the Indian industrial class was becoming increasingly

conscious of its identity and interests is reflected in the growing number of trade organizations during this period. Up to the close of the 1880's, all the chambers of commerce in India were primarily British. Beginning with 1885, however, when the first such organization was promoted by the Indians, the growing number of Indian chambers of commerce indicated a new sense of independence on the part of Indian industrialists. The most important of such bodies were the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce (1887) and the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay (1907).¹⁶

The First World War strengthened these trends still further. As the English engineers were no longer available, Indians rose on the organizational ladder, and the disruption in imports, augmenting demand for indigenous products, brought an increasingly larger number of Indian entrepreneurs to the fore. Some of the merchant communities, such as the Marwaris, which had so far remained confined to trading and moneylending, moved into the industrial field.¹⁷ All new entrepreneurs did not come from the merchant castes however. For some of them, business was an entirely new experience. As a result of the enterprising success of Indians, the English monopoly in fields such as coal became a thing of the past, and even the steel produced by the Tatas, though much inferior to the products of British factories, achieved a measure of respectability.

Larger in number, stronger in professional expertise, and varied in social composition, the new entrepreneurial class displayed a remarkably mature attitude to the ruling masters. Like the industrialists of the preceding generation, they continued to profess loyalty to the empire. At the same time it was not willing to give up the advantages it had gained for itself. It was ready to accept, even support, India's imperial connection, but it was no longer prepared to play second fiddle to British business interests. Exactly as the Indian National Congress, in which several Indian industrialists were active,¹⁸ was clamouring for a position of equality for Indians with the British subjects of the empire, the emerging industrial elite considered itself entitled to the same kind of treatment as British entrepreneurs received from the government.

2. Indian Big Business and the Nationalist Movement

This was the scenario when Gandhi appeared on the political firmament of India. Even before returning to the country in 1915, he had attracted the attention of Indian political circles for his 'heroic endeavours'¹⁹ against racial discrimination in South Africa. His method of counter-attacking injustice evoked as much praise as his success against the South African Government. Here perhaps was a leader whom the Indians were waiting for — a leader who could adopt a most militant posture and yet preach the gospel of peace and non-violence; who was second to none in

professing loyalty to the Crown and yet was not willing to settle for anything less than what he considered to be the rightful place of India in the British imperial order; who used the most civil and polite language while advocating the national cause or pressing for the rights of his people and yet left no one, friend or foe, in any doubt about the seriousness of his purpose. Never did the Indians have a leader who was at once so complex and so simple, a bewildering enigma and yet as transparent as glass, a shrewd and calculating politician and yet a deeply religious man. His was a voice the like of which had never been heard before — a voice that rose above all other voices as Jawaharlal Nehru put it.²⁰

The Indian industrialists found Gandhi's charm irresistible, as did other sections of the Indian population. His stress on truth, non-violence, peace, and self-reliance appealed to them immensely as these virtues seemed to conform to their own cultural orientation. His saintly demeanour created the kind of aura around him which has always made a deep impression on the Indian people in general and businessmen in particular. He symbolized the general urge among Indians for self-rule, but his determination not to deviate from peaceful means under any circumstances fitted in admirably with the businessman's abhorrence for conflict. Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship was particularly appealing to them, for it held no immediate threat to the capitalist system which was experiencing increasingly severe strains after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution.²¹ There was much in the Gandhian scheme of things with which the industrialists could have little sympathy — his emphasis on *gram swarajya* or village self-sufficiency, his advocacy of cottage and small-scale industries, and his stress on the negation of wealth²² — but as long as coercion was ruled out as a means, these planks in Gandhi's programme were of no immediate relevance. Never in the history of the Congress organization did any of its leaders succeed in establishing such an intimate bond with the Indian industrialists as Gandhi did. While their relationship with the organization during the first thirty years of its history was purely institutional, it became immensely personal after 1915 thanks to the spell that Gandhi cast on them.

The Ahmedabad millowners, most of whom were Jains and Vaishnava banias, were the first to come under his influence, partly because of their physical proximity — he had settled down in the textile town after returning from South Africa — and partly because he seemed to personify and articulate the traditional Gujarati attitude towards life and issues. They met him frequently, attended his prayer meetings, and treated him and his advice with considerable deference. Not only persons with a traditional outlook, such as Mangaldas Giridhardas and Kasturbhai Lalbhai, but also more westernized individuals like Ambalal

Sarabhai, were irresistibly drawn towards him. As the saint of Sabarmati grew in stature and influence, industrialists belonging to other parts of the country joined the growing ranks of his disciples. Among the most important and useful discoveries were Ghanshyam Das Birla, a Calcutta-based industrialist who was fast emerging as the principal spokesman of Indian business interests and his fellow Marwari in Bombay, Jamnalal Bajaj.²³ A large number of traders and merchants of lesser standing were attracted to him in Bombay Presidency which came to be known as the 'keep of Gandhism'.²⁴ This is not to suggest that all business leaders flocked to Gandhi's banner. A large number of them, including some of the most influential ones such as Purshotamdas Thakurdas of Bombay, remained skeptical of his aims and methods. But there is no doubt that Gandhi's leadership won for the Congress a much wider base of support and sympathy among the Indian businessmen than ever before. More than anything else, his charisma, his precepts, and his personal life-style served to politicize the Indian business class beyond measure.

It must be stressed, however, that the industrialist admirers of Gandhi did not always see eye to eye with him or submit to his judgement. Far from it, Ambalal Sarabhai, for example, whose anonymous donation is reported to have saved the Sabarmati Ashram from premature closure, in his capacity as the President of the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association, led a determined fight against the politician-saint when the latter led a protracted labour strike in Ahmedabad in 1918.²⁵ Kasturbhai Lalbhai's 'great respect for Mahatmaji' did not prevent him from castigating the 'outsider' for meddling in an industrial dispute; the fast undertaken by Gandhi to force the millowners into an amicable settlement was, in the eyes of the Ahmedabad millowner, a coercive measure.²⁶ Even Birla who looked upon himself as one of Gandhi's 'pet children' acted against his advice on several occasions.²⁷ Gandhi, however, was too clever or too catholic a leader to permit minor friction to interfere with enduring relationships. After all, his industrialist followers were not the only ones who disagreed with him; some of his closest political disciples and co-workers, including Jawaharlal Nehru, had even more violent differences with him.²⁸ But there was something in the nature of the man which helped him discriminate between the community of intrinsic interests and the grounds of extrinsic divergence and shape his strategies accordingly. He needed the support of the industrialists to build a national consensus against alien rule, and their money to finance his numerous constructive programmes. And the industrialists, in their turn, had no doubt whatsoever that if there was one man who could restrain the Congress from adopting a rabid anti-capitalist posture, it was Gandhi, and that their economic demands could not be secured without the help of the Congress.²⁹

Even the most ardent supporters of Gandhi and most vocal sympathizers of the Congress among the Indian industrialists, however, were not prepared to alienate the government of the day. This can be explained in the context of the growing clash of interest between the Indian and British business classes. As the former became increasingly more conscious of their distinct identity and destiny, the European interests began to experience a mounting threat to their position of superiority which they had no intention of giving up. The process of estrangement was somewhat subtle in the beginning, but the gulf between the two groups became unbridgeably wide because of post-war developments. The prospect of an increasing role for Indians in the governance of the country, as promised in the Montagu Declaration of 1917, made the Europeans exceedingly uneasy and the Indians could not view with equanimity the determined efforts of manufacturers in England to regain their position in Indian markets which they had nearly lost during the war. The growing rift between the two groups was reflected in the formation, first, of the Associated Chambers of Commerce in 1921, and later, and as a reaction to it, of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce in 1927. The former was a coalition of all European trade organizations in the country and the latter was an apex body of the Indian chambers.³⁰ The 1920s thus witnessed a clear polarization between the two warring groups of businessmen, and a hostile administration could tilt the delicate balance unduly against the Indians.

Fortunately, the government was at that time keen to retain the goodwill for Indian big business. In an era of mounting mass political activity, which Gandhi's leadership had ushered in, the landed gentry and industrial-mercantile interests were perhaps the only groups whom the alien rulers could hope to prevent from gravitating towards the Congress. The basis of representation as provided in the Reform Act of 1919 was a clear pointer to the government strategy. The legislatures created under the Act were to comprise, among others, the representatives of various interest-groups, including labour and capital, and capital was further subdivided into various categories such as millowners, merchants, Indian business, European business etc. The system of interest representation was expected to preclude the domination of nationalist elements over the legislatures and prevent them from developing into a united forum against the government. Another indicator of the government anxiety not to alienate Indian business interests was its flat refusal to lower the import duty on Manchester goods in 1920, in spite of severe pressure. The duty had been raised as a revenue measure during the war, when English producers, unable to export goods to India, could not have been overly exercised over the decision.³¹ Admittedly, 'the mystic bond of racial affinity'³² with the rulers of the land, to

use Bagchi's picturesque phrase, was a factor in favour of the British business interest in India. The government, nevertheless, was keen to project an unbiased image of itself and, thus, its support for European interests could not be taken for granted. Any move on the part of Indian big business to align itself unequivocally with the Indian National Congress under these conditions would have been counter-productive.

Consequently, the visible affiliation of Indian industrialists with the Congress, a characteristic feature of national politics before the First World War, declined as the organization set off on an agitational course under Gandhi. Not a single important leader of Indian business was actively associated with the Congress after 1919. A policy of equidistance from the government and the Congress was considered to be more appropriate. Even a man like Birla, whose personal loyalty to the Mahatma was beyond question, assumed the role of 'having to defend Bapu before Englishmen and Englishmen before Bapu'.³³ With free access to the Congress leaders and the ruling authorities alike, he could act as unofficial mediator between the two parties and, thus, enjoy considerable leverage with both. Behind this facade of equidistance, however, was a four-pronged strategy: (i) keep aloof from the confrontational-agitational aspects of the freedom struggle, (ii) support with funds such constructive activities which were indirectly linked with the Congress organization, (iii) influence policy formulation by the Congress to ensure that its thinking on major issues affecting business interests was in tune with their own, and (iv) act in unison with the nationalist-minded members of the legislatures to press the demands of Indian industry.

The strategy unfolded itself only gradually; various elements of it emerged in response to the exigencies of the situation rather than as part of a grand design conceived in advance. Also the Indian business class as a whole did not support this strategy. For, there was a very strong group of Bombay-based industrialists, including Dorabji Tata, Ibrahim Rahimtoola and Cowasji Jehangir, who differed from this approach which seemed to be heavily weighted in favour of the Congress.³⁴ Socially closer to the ruling race, these elements remained suspicious of the Congress leadership and leaned more towards the government. Further, there were groups within groups. For instance, those who sympathized with the Congress were divided between the moderate and aggressive nationalists. There were divisions within the loyalist group as well. Some were more vocal in their support for the government, others were more subdued, and a few found it difficult to take an unequivocal position.

None perhaps personified the loyalist dilemma more than Purshotamdas Thakurdas who was intimately connected with the House of Tatas. Sometimes he sided with the Tatas, and on other occasions with the

Birlas. In 1920, when the loyalists decided under Dorabji Tata's inspiration to form an Anti-Non-Cooperation Society in Bombay to counter the agitational plan of the Congress, Purshotamdas co-operated with them. But later, in 1929, when Tata and some other pro-government industrialists attempted to form a capitalist association in the Legislative Assembly in co-operation with European interests, the cotton king of Bombay reacted strongly against the move. Pointing to the inherent clash of interests between indigenous and foreign business, he added that 'Indian commerce and industry are only an integral phase of Indian nationalism and that deprived of its inspiration in Indian nationalism, Indian commerce and Indian industry stand reduced to mere exploitation.'³⁵ These words could as well have been spoken by G.D. Birla whose nationalist bias was more pronounced. Again, while the Tatas remained aloof from the FICCI, Purshotamdas was one of its founder members.³⁶

The Bombay cotton merchant was not the only one to alternate between the two positions; innumerable groups and individuals shifted their sympathy from one side to the other, depending on the issues, or adopted postures entirely independent of the two. To view the Indian business class as a cohesive entity or divide it neatly into various groups with reference to its attitude to the Congress would be misleading indeed. And yet it can be safely maintained that those who generally sympathized with the nationalist cause and subscribed to the four-pronged strategy outlined above represented the more dominant coalition.

3. Industrialist-Nationalist Collaboration in the Central Assembly

A brief discussion on the reaction of the Indian business class to specific issues and developments would support the conclusion reached at the end of the preceding section. The first major event that unfolded the Gandhian technique of political action and marked a break from the earlier period was the Non-cooperation Movement of 1921. Whatever their private sympathies, the public posture of big industrialists and merchants, by and large, was one of utter indifference, and some like Purshotamdas Thakurdas, were downright hostile. While deprecating the 'listlessness' of the government in attending to 'genuine and apparent grievances' he chastised the Congress for having given to 'the masses the very dreary and dangerous satisfaction of resting content with destructive work'.³⁷ Birla, Ambalal Sarabhai, Kasturbhai Lalbhai or other industrialist disciples of Gandhi remained silent; we at least have no record of their views. In fact the major part of the financial support for the agitation came from traders and speculators in Bombay rather than big industrialists, even though the boycott of foreign goods

benefited the millowners. After the withdrawal of the movement, however, when Gandhi decided to devote his time and energy to a constructive programme, the industrialists of all hues favoured the legislative route to reform even though the mahatma was unequivocally opposed to entry into the assembly. Instead of accepting the ticket of the Swaraj Party which had captured the leadership of the Congress, however, those representing Indian business interests came to the assembly either as independents or as the nominees of the less militant Nationalist Party, led by Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya, with whom Gandhi had a 'fundamental difference of opinion'.³⁸

Within the Assembly, however, the industrialist members worked closely with the Swarajists. Kasturbhai, elected at the initiative and with the support of Vallabhbhai Patel to represent the Ahmedabad Mill-owners' Association, had a close liaison with Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel whose candidacy for the speakership he actively supported. Though he avoided joining any faction, he attended most of the private meetings of the Swarajists and invariably voted with them. Motilal Nehru, in fact, regarded him as a better Swarajist than any of the regular members of his party.³⁹ Purshotamdas Thakurdas who represented the Indian Merchants' Chamber had no particular sympathy for the Swarajists and yet his positions on major issues were often similar to those of Kasturbhai, one of his closest friends. So was the case with G.D. Birla who had a brief stint as a legislator in 1926-27 on the ticket of the Nationalist Party. Not the party label or the lack of it but the community of interests bound these somewhat disparate elements together.

This can be supported by their utterances and voting behaviour in the assembly. Both Kasturbhai and Purshotamdas championed the cause of Indian shipping and pleaded for setting up nautical colleges and schools for the training of Indian seamen; the revenue realized from the merchant marine could be used to finance such activities. Both impressed on the government the need to purchase its requirements for the armed forces in India itself, and demanded safeguards against fraudulent practices adopted by foreign suppliers because of which the indigenous match industry was suffering. However, the issue which created the greatest measure of unity between the industrialists and non-industrialist members of the assembly was that of the countervailing excise duty on Indian textile production. Moving the resolution to repeal the measure — 'so imperative that it cannot be effected a day too soon' — Kasturbhai spoke like a firebrand nationalist: 'In the age we are living, Sir,' he thundered, 'political domination is sought to be utilised for economic domination of the subject race and the levy of the cotton excise is an instance in point. . . . This duty is a standing emblem of India's political subservience.'

Quoting scholars like Romesh Chandra Dutt, Mahadev Govind Ranade, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he unhesitatingly declared that the levy had been imposed to please Lancashire and concluded with a fervent plea to eliminate this source of 'insult to our national sense of self-respect'. Those who supported Kasturbhai's move included Motilal Nehru, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The repeal of the contemptible impost pleased not only those who fought for it in the legislature, but also those nationalists who had opted to remain out of it.⁴⁰

Protection for Indian industry was another issue which united the industrialists and nationalists of all hues. What was only a feeble whisper, before the Armistice that ended the First World War, became a battlecry after 1919. The imposition of revenue duty at a level sufficiently high to provide some kind of protection to the match industry in 1922 and the creation of the Tariff Board in the following year were grudging concessions to the critics of the hands-off policy of the government. Instead of pacifying nationalist opinion, however, these gestures only encouraged them to be more aggressive. It is significant that all sections of Indian opinion, both in and out of the central legislature and irrespective of their political sympathies, supported the proposal to grant protection to Indian steel which was then synonymous with the house of Tatas.⁴¹ In fact, one of the most powerful speeches ever delivered on the issue was that of G.D. Birla, his differences with Dorabji on matters of political strategy notwithstanding.⁴²

The strong feeling of the Indian members of the assembly, regardless of their political connections, is reflected in the fight for raising the duties on imported piecegoods. As a result of the growing competition from Japan after the First World War, the Indian textile industry was experiencing severe pressure. All members of the Tariff Board, consisting of a British president and two Indian members, which conducted an inquiry into the matter in 1927, agreed that the Japanese threat was too real to be ignored, but they differed on remedial measures. The president recommended a 4 per cent duty on all imported piecegoods, with an additional impost on Japanese yarn. As this would have done little to check the inflow of Manchester goods, the majority pleaded for a bounty on yarns above 30 counts along with a duty of 4 per cent on all imported cloth, irrespective of their place of origin. Under pressure from the British interests, however, the government rejected both the recommendations and took some half-way measures to pacify Indian public opinion. As the competition from Japan became more severe, the Government of India appointed in 1929 G.S. Hardy of the Commerce Department to study the whole question afresh and submit his recommendation. Hardy found that the Japanese competition in piecegoods

was the severest and that Lancashire had a preponderant share in the Indian market for the finer varieties of coloured and grey piecegoods and bleached products. He, therefore, recommended an increase of the tariff on the imports of medium varieties.⁴³

Instead of acting on this recommendation, however, the government introduced a bill based on the principle of imperial preference which sought to differentiate between the imports from British and non-British sources. This aroused the ire of practically all the elected members of the legislature. G.D. Birla who had resigned from the assembly in 1927 but returned to it in 1928, made one of his most impassioned and forceful speeches against the measure which, while providing 'a small protection to the Indian industry' would enable Lancashire to 'wrest her lost territory' from Japan.⁴⁴ Except Purshotamdas Thakurdas and the nominated members, all Indian representatives took the same position and, when the government stuck on to its guns, the members belonging to the Nationalist Party, to which Birla belonged, and the New Swaraj Party walked out of the house and later resigned their seats in protest. Gandhi 'was filled with joy' when he heard of the resignation by Birla and others.⁴⁵

During all these years, there was yet another question which was raising serious doubts in the mind of the Indian business leaders about the bona fides of the government. This related to the rupee-sterling ratio. The problem had defied a satisfactory solution for a long time, ever since it arose in the last quarter of the 19th century. The First World War aggravated it still further. The rising price of silver threw the old ratio, fixed around the turn of the 19-20th century, out of gear and by the time the war ended the value of the rupee, a silver coin, had increased to 2 s. The recommendation of the Babington Smith Committee in 1919 to fix the value of the rupee at 2 s. gold shot up the exchange rate to 2 s. 10 d.⁴⁶

The high value of the rupee was fixed in the teeth of opposition from the lone Indian member of the committee. Now the cause was taken up by the Indian business interests. They were opposed to the new rate because it would place the British exporters to India in an advantageous position at a time when they were making a determined bid to recapture a large share of the Indian market and it would hurt the interests of the Indian exporter. No sooner was the new parity fixed than the spokesmen of Indian business and industry trained their guns on the government. They attacked the decision in the legislatures, in the Currency Commission, and in the press. The Currency League was formed to mount further pressure on the government. Initially, Gandhi was not quite convinced that a lower rate of exchange would be in India's interest but he and his followers like Vallabhbhai Patel were eventually

persuaded to fall in line.⁴⁷ Consequently, in the central legislature, the representatives of Indian business and the nationalists put up a common front against the official line. In some of their most powerful speeches, Birla and Thakurdas tore the arguments in favour of a higher parity to pieces, and the Swarajists and Nationalists supported them. So strong was the coalition that the government had to agree to lower the rate to 1 s. 6 d. The concession did not satisfy the Indian members and they voted against the bill *en bloc*. It was, however, passed by a slender majority of 3 in spite of the solid backing of the official, nominated, and European members of the house.⁴⁸

Whatever their minor differences, the representatives of Indian business and political factions in the assembly thus made common cause against the government on matters affecting Indian economic interests. If the hidden agenda behind the concept of interest representation was to wean the burgeoning industrial class from the rising wave of nationalism, it failed conspicuously. In fact, it produced just the opposite result. The schism between Indian business and the British expatriates, visible in the beginning of the 1920s, widened further as a result of frequent clashes between their respective representatives in the legislature, and the repeated attack on the British imperial policy by the business leaders in the course of the debates on various issues gladdened the heart of nationalist politicians. The latter's support, in turn, for the various concessions for which the industrial leaders were clamouring, softened the attitude of even those who, like Purshotamdas Thakurdas, had been skeptical of nationalist intentions earlier. Whatever might have been Gandhi's calculations in opposing the entry into the legislatures, there is no doubt that no other forum could have provided a better opportunity to the spokesmen of economic nationalism on the one hand and political emancipation on the other to appreciate each other's respective positions and the basic unity of their interests and objectives.

While flouting Gandhi's advice against legislative involvement, a section of Indian business leadership had kept open the line of communication with him. G.D. Birla never failed to take the Mahatma into confidence about his moves and activities through a regular exchange of letters and occasional meetings. The leaders of the Gujarati millowning class, Ambalal Sarabhai, Kasturbhai Lalbhai and others, did not write as many letters, but they met Gandhi frequently. Another method through which they ingratiated themselves with the saint-politician was by donating liberally for his innumerable constructive activities which, though technically unconnected with the Congress, served to expand its mass base. In practically every alternate letter, Gandhi asked Birla for some amount or other and the Marwari magnate never refused — be it for the khadi programme, Harijan uplift, or publication of journals and

magazines. In fact, during the 1920s, Birla emerged as the most important single financier of Gandhi who, in his characteristic humility, regarded him as one of his 'mentors'. The Mahatma did not need money for himself but other Congressmen, whose material requirements were greater, did. By helping them tide over their financial difficulties on several occasions, Birla established a claim on their gratitude and a right to be heard and taken seriously in the corridors of the Congress conclave. At the same time he scrupulously avoided giving any donation to the Congress directly. The Gujarati millowners were less generous with their money but a sense of cultural affinity bound them with Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel, his principal lieutenant in the Gujarat region.⁴⁹

Another factor that influenced the attitude of an important section of the Indian business class towards the Congress in the 1920s was the rising tempo of the left-dominated labour movement. Particularly affected were the Bombay mills which witnessed a series of strikes in 1928 and 1929. Cotton manufacturers of the city had faced labour unrest several times before but what they experienced during the closing years of the 1920s was something very different. The leadership of the Girni Kamgar Union, which spearheaded the movement, was now in the hands of 'a group of firebrands who were firm believers in the Communist ideology'. Never before had such a ferocious propaganda been unleashed, not only against the Bombay millowners but also against the capitalist order itself. Never before had the Indian cotton manufacturer experienced such perpetual fear of disruption. Strikes caused dislocation in the Tata Steel Works also around the same time. Dorabji Tata's ill-fated move to form a party of the capitalists was provoked by these events. The more practical among the industrialist leaders, however, concluded that the Congress was a lesser evil under the prevailing conditions. Although the Congress was no less active on the labour front and its pro-labour posture was not always to the liking of the capitalists, the resentment caused by the propaganda of the All India Trade Union Congress dominated by it was mild compared to that of the leftist unions. Business leaders had no doubt that, as long as Gandhi had the commanding voice in the Congress organization, conciliation rather than confrontation would be the guiding principle for the Congress-dominated union. The effectiveness of the Gandhian approach to labour-management relations was there for all to see in Ahmedabad. The principal manufacturing centre in Gujarat was not quite free from the symptoms of labour unrest in the closing years of the 1920s, but the arbitration machinery created under Gandhi's inspiration, following the strike of 1918, helped resolve differences between the textile workers and their employers. Industrial relations in Ahmedabad, consequently, continued to be peaceful while Bombay reeled under a prolonged strike.⁵⁰

4. Business Attitudes to Non-Cooperation

The 1920s, thus, witnessed a growing sense of interdependency between the Congress and the Indian capitalist class. Despite all their sympathy for the nationalist cause and protests against the discriminatory policies of the government, however, the industrial leaders had no intention of losing whatever leverage they still enjoyed with the authorities. These contradictory pressures were reflected in their approach to the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Fearing that an open confrontation between the government and the Congress would further hurt their interests at a time when economic prospects were none too bright, they tried to dissuade Gandhi from throwing down the gauntlet. The best way to do this was to convince the Mahatma, who had once again regained his position as the undisputed leader of the Congress, of the usefulness of attending the First Round Table Conference to be convened in November 1930 to resolve the Indian political question. Birla, therefore, pleaded with Gandhi:

My own impression is that for the present we will not be getting full Dominion Status [which was the demand of the Congress then]. Still we will achieve a great deal just now, leaving the rest to be realized in the course of the next 5-10 years. . . . The sum and substance of all this is that it would be decidedly to our advantage for you to meet the British Cabinet. Let us not miss this opportunity.

He had written this letter after a dinner meeting with Lord Irwin and there is little doubt that Birla's initiative had the blessings of His Majesty's representative in India.⁵¹

Gandhi, however, ignored the plea. Instead of going to London, he decided to march to Dandi. This was the beginning of the second major agitation Gandhi launched against British rule. Nothing he or any other political leaders had done before had ignited the masses to such an extent as did the movement heralded by Gandhi's trek to this little-known place on the Gujarat coast. Every section of the society heeded the call of the mahatma; no part of the country remained unaffected by the national upsurge. The peasants in the rural areas broke the salt law and challenged the British authority in various other ways; the urban centres witnessed powerful campaigns in support of the boycott of foreign goods.

While the masses gave the fullest possible support to Gandhi, the response of big business was not very different from what it had been to the non-cooperation movement. Little concrete support came from the industrialists. Birla, who continued to remain in close touch with the mahatma, provided no financial support and his father was a known

opponent of the movement.⁵² Purshotamdas continued to remain sceptical of Gandhi's methods as ever before. Civil disobedience, in his opinion, was 'a very dangerous weapon in the hands of a population, the majority of whom are illiterate'. Distrustful of mass politics in general, he felt that the movement would 'teach the people an extremely dangerous lesson which may greatly inconvenience even a Swaraj Government'. With all his sympathy for Gandhi, Ambalal Sarabhai remained too preoccupied with his doubt about the constitutionality or otherwise of the movement to do anything tangible.⁵³ Kasturbhai Lalbhai was among a small group of industrialists who risked a more viable support to the agitation. On the suggestion of Dada Saheb Mavlankar, a prominent nationalist lawyer of Ahmedabad, he had agreed to be the custodian of the funds of a trust associated with Gandhi, out of which the families of the Dandi marchers were being supported. This aroused the ire of the government. His 'name had come into such prominence with the Government that they raided our office at Pankore Naka and I had a telephonic message from my friend Lala Shri Ram from Delhi that I was likely to be arrested'. Since the police search revealed nothing incriminating, the Ahmedabad industrialist was left alone.⁵⁴

As on the occasion of the Non-cooperation Movement, commercial interests — merchants and traders — supported the agitation more enthusiastically than the industrialists. Throughout the 1930s, the latter were repeatedly condemned for their aloofness by the radical elements. Attempts have been made to explain this cleavage in the Indian business class by reference to their differing perception of the economic distress caused by the depression.⁵⁵ It is true that there was much in the boycott movement which seemed to threaten the interest of the industrialists who abhorred violence and the hartal that went with it, and it is also undeniable that the Congress propaganda that the economic distress was solely due to the government's fiscal policies made a greater impact on the trading classes. But to explain their respective attitudes to the agitation in the context of their immediate economic interest alone will be misleading for, boycott was no unmixed evil to either group. The hope that a depressed demand for foreign goods would augment indigenous production would have been more than counter-balanced, at least at the initial stages, when the adverse consequences of the boycott were yet to manifest themselves, by the fear of disrupted production in the industrialists' mind. And whatever might have been his other calculations, the trader could not have seen a direct and immediate benefit to himself in the disruption of the market for imported goods. Almost up to the onset of the Civil Disobedience Movement, some captains of Indian industry were expressing their faith in Gandhi's judgement and stressing self-government as the only solution of India's economic ills.⁵⁶

If they became more cautious in their professions and actions after the movement gained momentum and the government adopted a tough attitude, it could not have been due to their immediate economic difficulties.

The fact of the matter is that the industrial leaders' response to civil disobedience conformed to the set pattern of behaviour witnessed during a period of open confrontation between the government and the nationalist movement. During quieter times, they could shout support for the Congress position on major issues without burning their bridges with the authorities, but when the battlelines were clearly drawn, a more discreet behaviour was called for. Not only did they need the co-operation of the government to run their business, most of them, like Birla and Purshotamdas, had direct and intimate links with the highest officials engaged in the political management of the country. They could not have hoped to retain these links if they were to tilt unduly towards the other side in the event of an open conflict. The trading classes, which were socially more distant from the British ruling circles and much closer to the masses had nothing to lose by way of their relations with the authorities and much to gain by falling in line with the general populace.

In view of the interdependency that had developed between the Congress and the industrialists by this time, however, it was not possible for their leaders to remain as indifferent to the Civil Disobedience Movement as they had been to the Non-cooperation Movement. A complete neutrality would have indirectly helped the government and thus alienated the Congress. What is worse, this would have caused a division among the industrialists themselves for, quite a few of their leaders, particularly Birla and Gujarati millowners whose personal loyalty to Gandhi remained intact, would have certainly resented a do-nothing stance. By way of compromise, as it were, they decided to support the causes for which the Congress was fighting without supporting its agitational tactics. In a resolution conceived by Ambalal Sarabhai and passed at its annual session, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry commended the 11-point programme of Gandhi and declared that 'No constitution will be acceptable to the country including the Indian mercantile community which does not give sufficient and effective power to a responsible Indian Government to carry out the administrative and economic reforms indicated by Mahatma Gandhi . . . and which does not vest full economic control in the legislature of India.' This apex organization of Indian business also condemned the police brutalities and refused to participate in the proposed Round Table Conference or even permit any member to participate in his individual capacity.⁵⁷ Even Purshotamdas Thakurdas was

constrained to resign his seat in the Central Legislative Assembly because of the growing pressure from the 'vast Indian commercial community'.⁵⁸ And yet the farthest that the FICCI went in its tangible support for the Civil Disobedience Movement was to recommend the setting up of Swadeshi Sabhas in different regions. Responding to this call, Lala Shri Ram, the then president of the FICCI, organized the Swadeshi Prachar Association, and the Ahmedabad millowners established a Swadeshi Sabha of their own. The mills accepting membership were required not to use imported material, if Indian manufactured stores and yarn were available.⁵⁹

Even these steps, signifying only limited support for the movement, were not to the liking of a section of big business. The ban on participating in the Round Table Conference created some controversy and even Birla who had welcomed the move in the beginning had to change his mind because of adverse reaction on the part of some members. He pleaded for the lifting of the ban and the Federation responded by clarifying that its resolution was recommendatory rather than mandatory in character and that the member-bodies were free to take their own decision in the matter.⁶⁰ Likewise, the move to organize Swadeshi Sabhas widened the rift between the Bombay millowners and their Ahmedabad counterparts as the latter distrusted the integrity of the former.⁶¹ Notwithstanding these difficulties, the FICCI resolutions, coupled with the liaison that some of its prominent leaders had established with the Congress during peace-time, enabled them to retain their position as honest brokers between the government and the leaders of the movement — particularly Gandhi, who was its supreme arbiter. The following letter written by Birla at the height of the agitation is probably the most clear statement of both the dilemma and the mission of the Indian industrial class:

Regarding the present agitation and the result of the Round Table Conference, I agree that we should try our best to get the country out of the present political turmoil. But I do not see my way so far. There could be no doubt that what we are being offered at present is entirely due to Gandhiji. . . . This leads one to the conclusion that if we are to achieve what we desire, the present movement should not be allowed to slacken. *We should, therefore, have two objects in view: one is that we should jump in at the most opportune time for a reconciliation and the other is that we should not do anything which might weaken the hands of those through whose efforts we have arrived at this stage.*⁶² (Emphasis added.)

This strategy was no more effective in persuading Gandhi to come to terms with the government than it had been in dissuading him from launching the agitation. Birla and others of his line of thinking knew the

Mahatma too well to believe that he would easily retrace his steps once he had taken the plunge. After he was thrown into jail, there was little possibility of any political dialogue with Gandhi even though Birla continued to correspond with him. The business leaders also believed that they could cut little ice with him as long as the movement was at its height and that any reconciliatory move in the face of the repressive policies of the government 'unnecessarily irritate people'. They began to see some hope in the closing months of 1930 when there were definite signs that the movement was sagging even though it was still quite potent in some pockets.⁶³ No less a supporter of the agitation than Jawaharlal Nehru, who was to fret and fume when Gandhi reached an understanding with the viceroy only a few months later, felt in October that 'Civil disobedience activities, though still flourishing everywhere, were getting a bit stale . . . the cities and middle classes were a bit tired of hartal, and processions.'⁶⁴ Official reports told the same story to the government, and Thakurdas, no enthusiastic supporter of the agitation but an uncanny judge of the situation, felt likewise.⁶⁵

This perhaps was the time for the mediation to succeed. But the mahatma, still in jail, was perhaps unaware of the change in the mood of the people. Birla, who sought a meeting with his mentor in December would have perhaps apprised him of the situation, but could not see him because Gandhi himself did not show much enthusiasm for a meeting.⁶⁶ It was only after he was released in January 1931, as a gesture of goodwill on the part of the viceroy, that he could have realistically sensed the situation. A hasty retreat, however, would have given a serious setback to the Congress. The master tactician must have been looking for an excuse to call off the agitation on his own before it collapsed, as he had done in the case of the Non-cooperation Movement. The mediation of Irwin's emissaries, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mukund Ramrao Jayakar and Srinivasa Sastri — back from the First Round Table Conference — came handy to him. So did the pleadings of Purshotamdas Thakurdas who had met the viceroy before meeting the mahatma.⁶⁷ Gandhi responded positively and agreed to meet Lord Irwin because he could 'no longer resist the advice' from 'friends whose advice I value'.⁶⁸ This paved the way for the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which led to the suspension of civil disobedience. To suggest, however, that 'business pressure played a crucial role' in bringing about this reconciliation⁶⁹ is to ignore the totality of compulsions impinging on Gandhi's thinking as much as attributing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact to the viceroy's charm. Neither view does justice to the intelligence of a remarkably astute political strategist.

It can be safely maintained, however, that the policy of equidistance from the government and the congress, so carefully nurtured by the industrial leaders, was eminently successful during the first phase of the

Civil Disobedience Movement. Their leverage with the confronting parties remained unimpaired even though their motives were suspected by a group of Congressmen. As the political storm subsided, the industrialists once again drew closer to the Congress because of their belief that, in the impending negotiations for political and economic reform, the co-operation of the Congress would be crucial. This is evident from their role both before and during the Second Round Table Conference, which began in 1931. Birla was among those who persuaded Gandhi to attend the London conclave, and the FICCI delegation to the conference, particularly Birla and Purshotamdas, followed Gandhi's lead in discussions on economic matters such as the rupee-sterling ratio, commercial discrimination, and financial safeguards.⁷⁰ The sole representative of the Congress and those representing Indian big business often made common cause, not only against the government but also against those Indians who were opposed to Gandhi's position. Birla complained bitterly to M.R. Jayakar that Tej Bahadur Sapru in the Federal Structure Committee sided with the government on the question of safeguards and added that 'it is really unfortunate that we could not carry your and Sir Tej's support even on matters in which legitimately we can claim to be heard'.⁷¹ In fact, so closely did the FICCI representatives toe the Mahatma line at London that, when the delegation's report was circulated, they were criticized by a number of constituent chambers 'for having tied up our conscience to the apron strings of the Congress'. The only defence that the delegation offered in its favour was that 'it could not fight foreign interest without the weight of the Congress and therefore could not go further than Gandhiji went at the Conference'.⁷²

5. Big Business, Honest Broker

When a frustrated Gandhi abandoned the conference and resumed civil disobedience in January 1932, as a result of which he was once again thrown in jail, Birla and his associates once again reverted to their mediatory role. Though the industrialist himself refused to participate in the negotiations any further, he persuaded the FICCI to continue to co-operate with the government 'in the framing of a suitable constitution for India' even though a faction led by Lala Shri Ram favoured a complete non-cooperation.⁷³ While the FICCI resolution permitted Purshotamdas to participate in the discussion, Birla himself continued his efforts to bridge the gulf between the mahatma and the government through his letters to Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, Lord Lothian, Parliamentary Under Secretary of the India Office, and other officers of the government as well as to the leaders of Indian liberals, particularly Tej Bahadur Sapru, and the captains of European business in India. Through these negotiations he kept his lines of communication

open and retained his position as a well-meaning mediator acceptable to both the parties.⁷⁴ His correspondence with Gandhi, of course, never stopped although they could not communicate on political matters very much while the Mahatma languished in jail.⁷⁵ The following excerpt from a letter written to Hoare soon after the resumption of civil disobedience is indicative of the role he saw for himself after the break-up of the Second Round Table Conference. After assuring the Secretary of State of the co-operation of big business in bringing about a political settlement he wrote:

I wish I could convert the authorities to the view that Gandhiji and men of his type are not only friends of India but also friends of Great Britain, and that Gandhiji is the greatest force on the side of peace and order. He alone is responsible for keeping the left wing in India in check. To strengthen his hands is, in my opinion, therefore, to strengthen the bond of friendship between the two countries. But I am afraid in the present atmosphere it is an uphill task to truly explain Gandhiji. Probably the best way to success in this mission is to give you our co-operation as far as possible. And with such 'disqualifications' as I possess, if you think I can be of any use in bringing about happy relations between the two countries, you can always rely on my humble services.⁷⁶

It must have been clear to Birla, however, that his mediation bid had little chance of success until the Indians were willing to water down their demand. One of the issues on which business leaders and the Congress were in complete agreement was full control over Indian finance — 'the crux of the full demand' according to Birla.⁷⁷ The government conceded the point in principle, but what it was willing to offer was hedged by so many safeguards that Birla thought that, in practice, ninety-nine per cent of the financial control was going to be vested in the hands of the governor-general.⁷⁸ A few other events also indicated to the industrialists that their business interests would never be safe in an imperial order. For example, the Imperial Economic Conference held at Ottawa in 1932, which was supposed to adopt a tariff agreement 'for the benefit of the trade of both the countries' resulted in the imperial preference system which indirectly offered protection to British industries in the preserved market of the empire. The commercial interests and nationalists alike condemned the agreement as an example of colonial exploitation and found it detrimental to Indian trade and industry. A public meeting held in Bombay under the chairmanship of the well-known financier, Lallubhai Samaldas, passed a resolution denouncing the pact in unequivocal language and its echo was heard in the assembly. So enraged were the business circles that Shanmukham Chetty, who had participated in the Ottawa deliberations as a member of the Indian delegation nominated by the government, had to resign from the executive committee of the FICCI.⁷⁹

Another incident which incensed an influential section of the industrial community was the Mody-Lees Pact of 1933. This resulted from a tripartite conference which discussed ways and means to check the rising imports of Japanese textile goods into India. The British side led by Sir William Clare-Lees conceded that Indian industry was entitled to a 'measure of protection against the imports of United Kingdom yarn and piece goods', and the Indians were willing to accept the principle of a lower level of protection against the United Kingdom as compared to other countries. Disagreement, however, arose on specific terms. The English products on which the import duty was sought to be lowered were in direct competition with the Ahmedabad mills which had a greater stake in the production of finer counts. To minimize the danger, therefore, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, one of the FICCI representatives, insisted on fixing a ceiling on imports from the United Kingdom, and, when this was rejected, walked out of the conference. Sir Homy Mody, who represented the Bombay Millowners' Association, signed the pact on behalf of the Indian cotton manufacturers, splitting the Indian mill-owning class as no other event had ever done before. Unconcerned, however, the government ratified the agreement.⁸⁰

Coming as they did on the heels of the decision to fix the rupee-sterling ratio at 18 d. and tie the Indian currency to the British pound, these two events reinforced the doubts of the nationalist-minded industrialists about the intentions of the government. Industrialists, at the same time, did not fail to notice the rising tempo of economic radicalism in a section of the Congress. Ever since the Lahore Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, the rising star on the Indian political firmament, was veering towards socialist doctrine and was even willing to 'honour and respect the red flag'⁸¹ which was anathema to the Indian capitalist class. Largely because of his influence on the counsels of the Congress, the Karachi session, meeting in the last week of March 1931, adopted the famous resolution on the 'Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme' which emphasized, among other things, that 'political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions' and 'safeguard the interests of industrial workers'. The resolution also advocated state control of 'key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport'.⁸²

While Nehru's concept of socialism was still rather vague, a band of young enthusiasts, openly wedded to Marxian doctrines, was becoming very vocal in the Congress. The capitalists, however, believed that Gandhi's overarching presence was a foolproof shield against radical propaganda. And the mahatma was quick to allay their fears at the annual convention of the FICCI which met barely a week after the Karachi session. Reacting to the complaint of the president, Lala Shri

Ram, that the Karachi declaration was issued without consultation with the business community on their 'vital interests' concerning economic matters, Gandhi declared in his inaugural address that the Congress 'would always be glad to avail of your advice and help'. To assure his listeners still further he added: 'The Congress stands for the industrial prosperity and progress of India. I cannot forget the services rendered by the commercial classes, but I want to go a step further. I want you to make the Congress your own and we would willingly surrender the reins to you. The work can be better done by you.'⁸³

A few years later, when Jayaprakash Narayan and others formed the Congress Socialist Party, the Working Committee expressed its displeasure and Gandhi publicly attacked their programme.⁸⁴ He spoke against them even more bitterly in private conversation with Birla. To the latter's way of thinking, the saint-politician was the most formidable bulwark against the tide of leftist propaganda and a very influential section of the Congress leadership was behind the mahatma in this respect. As Birla put it, soon after the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, 'Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and Rajendra Babu are all fighting communism and socialism. It is, therefore, necessary that we who represent healthy capitalism should help Gandhi as far as possible and work with a common object.'⁸⁵

Not all capitalists belittled the radical sceptre and a section of them were to raise a hue and cry against the socialist proclivities of Nehru a couple of years later, but for the time being the rise of the leftist tide did not have much impact on the Congress-industry axis. In fact, Birla never lost hope that, even if the Congress as an organization was captured by the radical elements, Gandhi would still carry the country with him and isolate them. He always made a subtle distinction between the Congress and its patron saint.⁸⁶

These were the calculations which guided the endeavours of Birla and his associates, after the break-up of the Second Round Table Conference, to bring about a rapprochement between Gandhi and the government. They, however, had little hope to cut any ice as long as the Congress continued with the Civil Disobedience Movement and the government with its repressive measures. After his release from jail, however, when Gandhi called off the agitation, ostensibly to enable his countrymen to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the Harijans, Birla saw the opportunity to revive his mediatory role. On the one hand he became more involved in the Mahatma's anti-untouchability drive and cottage industries programme, on the other he continued to press the authorities to create 'mutual appreciation between leaders in the two countries'.⁸⁷ Through his contact with Gandhi, he also

sensed that the latter would not be opposed to a Congress re-entry into the legislatures.⁸⁸

Birla had not wholly succeeded in removing the distrust between the two parties when the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1935, creating a federal structure for India. Based on the principles of the White Paper published earlier, the Act gave little satisfaction to the Congress or the business interests, and was denounced by both.⁸⁹ Gandhi, however, privately felt that the Act was capable of producing good results if worked in the right spirit. Birla, with his an uncanny business instinct, concluded that it contained the 'seeds which were to germinate, blossom and bear fruit' in full independence for the country.⁹⁰ He, therefore, did not want let this opportunity slip. With Gandhi's blessings, he proceeded to London immediately after the Act was passed and established very useful contacts with the principal leaders of both the major political parties in England, including Lord Linlithgow who was to take over as viceroy in 1936 and was thus to oversee the implementation of the new scheme. He used to send long reports on his discussions with the British leaders to Gandhi in order to keep the undisputed leader of the Congress informed of British thinking.⁹¹

Birla returned to India in September 1935 with the impression that the imperial authorities were serious about the new constitutional arrangement and that the safeguards provided in the Act would not be misused to meddle with the Indian administration, once the Indian ministers joined the government. Without losing a moment, he went straight to Wardha to give his mentor 'a first hand report of my impressions'. Gandhi still remained very cautious because of his feeling that the friendliness that Birla 'had experienced in England did not yet prevail in Government circles in India', but he agreed to advise the Congress 'to make no new commitment about the Reforms' before the arrival of the new viceroy, and 'promised to use his influence to that end'.⁹² If the Congress eventually agreed to give a fair trial to the Reform Act, Birla's behind-the-scenes role — to 'interpret Bapu to the Britishers and the Britishers to Bapu' — must be given due credit.

By 1935, the industrialists had perfected their strategy to deal with the Congress. The same strategy continued to condition their behaviour in the subsequent phase of the national movement and their attitude to the Congress during this period had a profound impact on post-freedom developments as well.

What were the underlying forces that shaped the industrialist response to the Congress during this period? To say that they were motivated by their class interest is to repeat a truism, but to explain their

behaviour with reference to their economic interests alone would be misleading. For, in a period of mass upsurge for national liberation, no segment of the population could remain unaffected by the wave of patriotism and the concern for its economic interest on the part of any class must be seen in the context of its instinctive love for political independence. The foregoing survey suggests that the behaviour of the industrialists during this crucial phase of our freedom struggle was further tempered by their personal links with the Congress leaders and the government.

Notes and References

1. For a comprehensive discussion see Dwijendra Tripathi, 'Occupational Mobility and Industrial Entrepreneurship in India : A Historical Analysis', *Developing Economies*, Vol. 19 (March 1981), pp. 52-68.
2. For this view see, D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India* (New York, 1934), pp. 38-40; R.K. Ray, *Industrialization in India : Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector, 1914-47* (Delhi, 1979), p. 59.
3. A.P. Kannangara, 'Indian Millowners and Indian Nationalism before 1914', *Past and Present*, No. 40 (July 1968), pp. 147-64. Referring to the decision regarding the excise duty, the Bombay Millowners' Association observed that 'all things considered the members of the Association have reasons to congratulate themselves that the eventual decision has not been more unfavourable than it is. . . .' S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills of India, 1854-1954* (Bombay, 1954), p. 70.
4. N.K. Sinha, 'Indian Business Enterprise : Its Failure in Calcutta (1800-1848)', *Bengal Past and Present*, Diamond Jubilee Number (July-December 1967), pp. 112-23.
5. Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (Hyderabad), Vol. II, pp. 553-600.
6. Amlendu Guha, 'Comprador Role of Parsi Seths, 1750-1850', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 48 (28 November 1970); Dwijendra Tripathi (ed.) *Business Communities of India : A Historical Perspective* (New Delhi, 1984).
7. Shirin Mehta, 'Social Background of Swadeshi Movement in Gujarat, 1875-1908', *Vidya*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1981), pp. 31-46; also see S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, pp. 86-8.
8. The following lines written by Bharatendu Harish Chandra around 1870 fairly represent the attitude of the nationalist school of Hindi poetry at this time:

अंगरेज राज सुख साज सजे सब भारी
पै धन विदेस चलि जात रहै अति ख्वारी ॥
भारत दुर्दशा

Dalpatram Dahyabhai, a prominent nationalist poet of Gujarat, of the period, also expressed the same kind of sentiments. Shirin Mehta, "Social Background", n. 7, p. 32.

9. The writings of these publicists bear this out. See Dadabhai Naoroji, *Essays, Speeches and Writings*, ed. by C.L. Parekh (Bombay, 1887); M.G. Ranade, *Essays on Indian Economics* (Bombay, 1898); R.C. Dutt, *Speeches and Papers on Indian Questions, 1892-1900* (Calcutta, 1904). B.G. Tilak, no admirer of British rule, unreservedly conceded that the 'people were dazzled at first' by the benefits of the British rule. Quoted in G.P. Pradhan and A.K. Bhagwat, *Lokmanya Tilak* (Bombay, 1958), p. 72.
10. For the resolutions passed and the speeches delivered at the annual sessions of the Congress, see Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom* (New Delhi, 1975), and Indian National Congress, *Congress Presidential Addresses* (Madras, n.d.).
11. Ratna and Rajat Ray, 'European Monopoly Corporations and Indian Entrepreneurship, 1913-1922 : Early Politics of Coal in Eastern India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 9, No. 20 (25 May 1974); Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Private Investment in India, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 165-70.
12. Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 117-36; S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, pp. 92-3.
13. S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, pp. 90-91; Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, n. 10 above, pp. 528-610; S.K. Sen, *The House of Tatas* (Calcutta, 1975), pp. 37-8.
14. For the careers of some of these see S.V. Kirloskar, *Yantrikanchi Yatra* (in Marathi, Kirloskarwadi, 1958); G.D. Khanolkar, *Walchand Hirachand: Man, His Times and Achievements* (Bombay, 1969); Arun Joshi, *Lala Shri Ram* (New Delhi, 1978); B.D. Amin, *The Rise and Growth of the Alembic Chemical Works* (Baroda, 1939); Ramkrishna Dalmia, *A Short Sketch of the Beginning of My Life and a Guide* (New Delhi, 1962); N.N. Desai, *Directory of Ahmedabad Mill Industry, 1929-1956* (Ahmedabad, 1957).
15. S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, p. 106.
16. M.V. Namjoshi, *Chambers of Commerce in India* (Bombay, 1967), p. 22.
17. Thomas A. Timberg, *The Marwaris* (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 166-71; Tripathi, 'Occupational Mobility', n. 1 above, pp. 62-6; *Private Investment*, n. 11 above, p. 216; Verrier Elwin, *The Story of Tata Steel* (privately printed, 1958).
18. For the Congress position see some of the resolutions passed at its annual sessions in Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, n. 10 above, pp. 553-610.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 588.
20. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, 1966), pp. 11-12.
21. For a concise account of some aspects of Gandhian philosophy see B.S. Andholia and D. Tripathi (eds.), *Gleanings from Gandhian Thought* (Jabalpur, 1959).
22. G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma* (Bombay, 1968), Introduction, p. XV.
23. While Birla was more active on the political front, Bajaj helped Gandhi in his constructive programme. See Kaka Kalelkar (ed.), *To a Gandhian*

Capitalist : Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Jamnalal Bajaj (Wardha, 1951).

24. A.D.D. Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics : Rising Nationalism and a Modernizing Economy in Bombay, 1915-1933* (New Delhi, 1978), p. 238.
25. No documentary evidence for Sarabhai's donation is available as it was made anonymously, but his generous gesture to Gandhi is common knowledge in Ahmedabad.
26. Dwijendra Tripathi, *Dynamics of a Tradition : Kasturbhai Lalbhai and His Entrepreneurship* (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 171-3.
27. Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, pp. 8-9, 16-17, 52.
28. Among the bitterest attacks on Gandhian economic philosophy is Jawaharlal Nehru's chapter entitled 'Paradoxes'. See Nehru, *Autobiography* (London, 1936).
29. G.D. Birla quoted in *Sunday*, 26 June-2 July 1983, p. 24.
30. Stanley Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 108-30, 156-96; H. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change : 50 Years of FICCI* (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 1-2; Rajat K. Ray, *Industrialization in India*, n. 2 above, pp. 297-309.
31. B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj* (London, 1976), Ch. I; S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, p. 153.
32. Bagchi, *Private Investment*, n. 11 above, p. 166.
33. G.D. Birla quoted in *Sunday*, n. 29 above, p. 24.
34. S. Bhattacharya, 'Cotton Mills and Spinning Wheels : Swadeshi and the Indian Capitalist Class, 1920-22', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. II, No. 47 (November 20, 1976).
35. Purshotamdas Thakurdas to N.M. Mazumdar, 7 June 1929. Purshotamdas Thakurdas Collection (hereinafter cited as PT collection), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, File No. 42/II; also see G.D. Birla to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, 19 June 1929. File No. 42/II; Purshotamdas Thakurdas to G.D. Birla, 30 July 1929, File No. 42/V. Files No. 24/I, and 24/III contain several letters written by businessmen to Purshotamdas Thakurdas against the Non-cooperation Movement. Also see Jamnadas Dwarkadas, 'Non-Cooperation : A Cry for Halt', *Bombay Chronicle*, 7 June 1920.
36. Kochanek, *Business and Politics in India*, n. 30 above, p. 159.
37. Thakurdas to Sir Henry Craik, 14 September 1920, PT collection File No. 24/III; Thakurdas to Birla, 11 December 1923, *ibid.*, File 42/III.
38. Gandhi to Birla, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, p. 17.
39. Tripathi, *Dynamics of a Tradition*, n. 26 above, p. 26.
40. India, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 20 March 1924, IV-36 (Delhi, 1974), pp. 2020-27; also see Tripathi, *Dynamics of a Tradition*, n. 26 above, pp. 175-9; also Frank Moraes, *Purshotamdas Thakurdas* (Bombay, 1967).
41. S.N. Sen, *The House of Tatas*, n. 12 above, pp. 47-50.
42. For early Congress support for protection, see Annie Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, n. 10 above, p. 586; Birla's speech is reproduced in

- G.D. Birla, *Path to Prosperity* (Allahabad, 1950), pp. 146-53; for the support of others see, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 14 February 1927, IX-16 (Delhi, 1927), pp. 746-85.
43. India: Office of Economic Advisor, *The History of Indian Tariff, 1924-1939* (New Delhi, 1940), p. 28.
 44. Birla, *Path to Prosperity*, n. 40 above, pp. 174-93.
 45. Gandhi to Birla, 10 April 1930, in G.D. Birla, *Bapu : A Unique Association* (Bombay, 1977), Vol. I, p. 138.
 46. Dwijendra Tripathi, 'Silver Question, India, and America', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 44, No. 132 (December 1966), pp. 789-98; K.N.S. Nambudiripad, *A Short History of Indian Currency* (Poona, 1955), pp. 144-52.
 47. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 25 January 1927.
 48. Birla, *Path to Prosperity*, n. 42 above, pp. 227-42.
 49. The Correspondence between Birla and Gandhi as contained in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above and Birla, *Bapu : A Unique Association*, n. 45 above (4 vols.), provide a good idea of Gandhi's financial demands on the Marwari industrialist. Also see, *Sunday*, n. 29 above, p. 25. For the attitude of the Gujarati and Bombay industrialists see Tripathi, *Dynamics of a Tradition*, n. 26 above, pp. 170-90; and Gordon, *Business and Politics*, n. 24 above, pp. 238-9.
 50. The Bombay Millowners' Association, *Report of 1928* (Bombay, 1929), II-IV; Ambalal Sarabhai to Thakurdas, 5 Nov. 1929 reply; Naoroji to Thakurdas, 28 March 1930; Birla to Thakurdas, 3 Nov. 1929, PT collection, F. No. 91; Mazumdar to Thakurdas, 22 May 1929 and Thakurdas to Mazumdar, 7 June 1929; G.D. Birla to Thakurdas, 26 April 1929, PT collection, File 42/II; S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, p. 167.
 51. Birla to Gandhi, 11 November 1929, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, pp. 40-1.
 52. Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism : The Civil Disobedience and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1930-31)', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (July 1976), p. 121; Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, n. 24 above, pp. 229-33.
 53. Sarabhai to Thakurdas, 17 November 1930, and reply, PT collection File No. 42/II.
 54. Niranjana Bhagat et. al. (eds.), *Tribute to Ethics : Remembering Kasturbhai Lalbhai* (Ahmedabad, 1983), p. 68.
 55. For this interpretation see Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*, n. 24 above, pp. 200-01. On the possible gain to the mill industry, see Birla to Gandhi, 28 April 1930 in Birla, *Bapu*, n. 45 above, Vol. I, pp. 140-2.
 56. See, for instance, D.P. Khaitan's address to the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, 5 March 1930, *Annual Report for 1930* (Calcutta, 1931). Also see Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism', n. 52 above, pp. 122-3.
 57. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, *Annual Report for 1930* (New Delhi, 1931).
 58. Thakurdas to Irwin, 31 May 1930, PT collection, File 99/II.

59. Arun Joshi, *Lala Shri Ram*, n. 14 above, pp. 223-5; Bhagat et. al. (eds.), *Tribute to Ethics*, n. 54 above, p. 69.
60. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, n. 30 above, pp. 14-5.
61. Bhagat et. al. (eds.), *Tribute to Ethics*, n. 54 above, p. 69.
62. Birla to Thakurdas, 16 January 1931, PT collection, File 42/VII.
63. Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism', n. 52 above, has given a brief account of the official reports, pp. 133-4; Thakurdas to Mody (undated but appears to have been written in August 1930), PT collection, File 100.
64. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, n. 28 above, p. 232.
65. Thakurdas to Motilal Nehru, 22 September 1930, PT collection, File 104; Thakurdas to D.P. Khaitan, 8 October 1930, *ibid.*, File 99/II.
66. Gandhi to Birla, 16 December 1930 in Birla, *Bapu*, n. 45 above, Vol. I, p. 148.
67. Gandhi's telegram to Thakurdas in Navjivan Trust, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad, 1971), XLV, 165; Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism', n. 52 above, p. 141.
68. Gandhi to Irwin, 14 February 1931, *Collected Works*, n. 67 above, Vol. XLV, pp. 175-6.
69. Sumit Sarkar, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism', n. 52 above, p. 141.
70. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, n. 30 above, p. 16.
71. Birla to Jayakar, 2 December 1931, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, pp. 46-7.
72. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, n. 30 above, p. 17.
73. Birla to Samuel Hoare, 14 February 1932, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, p. 49; Rajat K. Ray, *Industrialization in India*, n. 2 above, p. 322.
74. For a feel of the nature of Birla's correspondence with some of the key persons see Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, pp. 41-67.
75. The Correspondence between Birla and Gandhi is contained in Birla, *Bapu*, n. 45 above, Vol. I, pp. 140-55.
76. Birla to Samuel Hoare, 14 March 1932, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, p. 52.
77. Birla to Thakurdas, 28 November 1930, PT collection, File 42/VII.
78. Birla to Tej Bahadur Sapru, 31 October 1931, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, pp. 42-5.
79. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, n. 30 above, pp. 32-5.
80. S.D. Mehta, *Cotton Mills*, n. 3 above, p. 182; Also Dwijendra Tripathi, *Dynamics of a Tradition*, n. 26 above, pp. 179-80.
81. Nehru's statement on 28 January 1930. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, *Selected Works* (New Delhi, 1973), Vol. IV, p. 232; Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 172-3.
82. Indian National Congress, *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Allied Matters* (New Delhi, 1969), pp. 3, 6-9.
83. Arun Joshi, *Lala Shri Ram*, n. 14 above, pp. 226-7.
84. Indian National Congress, *Resolutions*, n. 82 above. See the resolution of 18 June 1934 on pp. 9-10. For the reaction of the Socialists, see P.L. Lakhanpal, *History of the Congress Socialist Party* (Lahore, 1946), pp. 44-5.
85. Birla to Thakurdas, 3 August 1934, PT collection, 42/VI.

86. Birla to Samuel Hoare, 14 March 1932, in Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, p. 51; also see Birla's record of an interview with Sir Henry Craik on 30 June 1935, *ibid.*, p. 145.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-130.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.
89. Venkatasubbiah, *Enterprise and Economic Change*, n. 30 above, p. 18.
90. Birla, *In the Shadow*, n. 22 above, p. 130.
91. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-86.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Chapter IX

Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress and the Philosophy of Non-Violence

M.S. Jain

THE MOST POTENT legacy of Gandhi is the technique of satyagraha — an instrument of action with tremendous power to effect change. His philosophy of non-violence and satyagraha has not been properly understood and, with the passage of time, satyagraha has become a generic name for all organized forms of opposition to authority which exclude violence. Some confusion has arisen because Gandhi was essentially a political activist and a practical philosopher, not a theorist or a system builder. From inception to culmination, Gandhi not only made efforts to elucidate his doctrine of satyagraha and non-violence but also strove to explain its various facets as he made newer and newer experiments with truth. Attention has therefore to be paid to the evolution of the technique of satyagraha and the philosophy of non-violence expounded by Gandhi in different historical situations. — The technique originated in the context of the problems of discrimination and deprivation faced by Indians in South Africa where Gandhi spent most of his time during 1893-1914. The first nine years were spent in Natal and the last eleven in Transvaal. In order to appreciate the evolution of the technique, the historical situation faced by the Indians must be examined in some details.

1. Early Experiments in South Africa

Two events of far-reaching significance for India were the grant of responsible government to the British colony of Natal in South Africa and the landing of M.K. Gandhi at Durban. Indian indentured labourers had been going to Natal since 1859 under a contract of 5 years' indentured service, after which they became free and eligible either for free return passage to India or a grant of crown land. The return of some of them to India brought harrowing tales of oppression and maltreatment. Natal planned a curtailment of the franchise available to free Indians domiciled there. The so-called 'Arab' traders, largely Muslims

from Gujarat and Maharashtra, who competed with and undersold the 'white' shopkeepers, driving them into liquidation, proved a greater irritant, since they were the more self-confident and ambitious Indian element in the colony. The success of these traders and hawkers led the English to carry on an intense propaganda against them.¹ The colonists, when they attained self-government in 1893, felt free to prevent free Indians from conducting business and exercising their franchise, although they were keen to ensure the supply and return of indentured labourers. Gandhi, on his arrival, experienced racial discrimination, insults and indignities, resultant from the anti-Indian feeling. He decided to challenge the validity of racial discrimination by Whites, 'to root out the disease' of colour prejudice, and suffer hardship in the process. He began addressing memorials to the Natal Government and the British Secretary of State for Colonies on different problems faced by the Indians. His efforts impressed even some British planters by their 'moderation' and 'impartiality', although there was no dearth of hostile reactions as well.

In 1894 the Natal Government proposed a law disfranchising all Asiatics save those who had already become voters at that time. Gandhi organized opposition to the bill and submitted a memorial with 10,000 signatures under the auspices of Natal Indian Congress to Lord Ripon, Secretary of State for Colonies, who disallowed the bill because of its colour bar. The British Government, to retain the loyalty of the white colonists and not to annoy the Indian public, insisted that the law should be non-discriminatory in its letter. The Natal Government modified the bill, removed the apparent racial discrimination and passed the Natal Immigration Restriction Bill, 1896, virtually restricting the entry of free Indians. The British allowed the new law as it had avoided open racial discrimination. Thereafter, the white colonists moved to their real goal of restricting trade opportunities to free Indians. Act 18 of 1897 empowered municipal licensing officers to renew trading licenses of Indian traders, which were generally not renewed. Appeals against the decision of licensing officers lay to a board, but not to a law court.² Thus the passage of the Immigration Restrictions Act, the Franchise Act and the Licensing Act during 1896-7 put the Indians in a 'desperate position'. The Licensing Act struck at the very roots of Indian survival in Natal. Gandhi's articles and letters on the abuses kept the issue alive. The discrimination against Indians, more or less along similar lines, was widespread in other White colonies also — Cape Colony, Transvaal and Orange Free State. In 1898, Transvaal enforced a law specifying areas in unhealthy and swampy localities where Indians could settle for trade purposes.

After the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, Natal relaxed

some restrictions to admit Indian refugees from the two Boer republics. Gandhi advocated Indian support to the British, arguing that 'if we desire to win our freedom and achieve our welfare as members of the British empire, here is a golden opportunity for us to do so by helping the British in the war by all the means at our disposal'.³ The underlying principle was an insistence on truth, i.e., one should appear to be as one really is and should act accordingly. It meant that Indian citizens of the British empire should help the empire in difficulty. The British authorities approved, after some delay, the formation of an Indian Ambulance Corps. Under the leadership of Gandhi, 1,100 Indians placed their services at the disposal of the Natal Government.

In 1901 Gandhi returned to India, leaving as his legacy the newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, and the 100-acre 'Communal' Phoenix Farm. He was called back in November 1902 as the British Secretary of State, Chamberlain, was visiting Africa. Gandhi, on his return, found that the situation of the Indians had taken a turn for the worse. He opened his office in Johannesburg and spent the next eleven years in Transvaal.

The Indians had hoped that the British victory over the Boer republics would bring an end to their troubles. Had the Indians continued to work in South Africa for all time as indentured labourers, agitation against Indian immigration might not have been started. In reality, their position deteriorated since the English were now all out to amass the maximum wealth in minimum time; they could not tolerate sharing the benefits of trade with Indian traders who successfully competed with white shopkeepers and drove the latter out of the field. The Asiatic Department, created after the Boer War, began to impose newer and newer restrictions on Indians and the earlier anti-Asiatic laws began to be strictly enforced. The British mercantile greed was now presented in the garb of preserving the Western — 'superior' — civilization from contact with the Oriental, 'inferior' civilization, thus justifying racial discrimination.⁴ The business and residence restrictions were increased so as to compel the free Indian traders to quit the colony. The eviction of Indian tenants by white landlords and the prohibition of transfer of licenses resulted in the closure of Indian trading establishments.

The need of the white colonies for indentured labour provided Lord Curzon an opportunity to demand that all established Indian traders be allowed to retain their places of business. He warned of hostile reactions in India to racial discrimination. Incidentally, at about the same time, the Supreme Court of Transvaal also declared that restriction of location could not be extended to business. Consequently, the Transvaal authorities sought to tighten the immigration restrictions. The British Commissioner, Selborne, became an advocate of the trading opportunities open to the white immigrants, who could not compete with the Asiatic

traders.⁵ He framed a new ordinance in August 1906 under which every Indian — man, woman, or child of 8 years and above — had to get himself re-registered by giving 10 fingerprints by a certain date. Failure to get registered would invite a £100 fine or 3 months' imprisonment with hard labour or expulsion. The certificate of registration had to be produced whenever demanded by a police officer.⁶

The Transvaal Indians under Gandhi's leadership deluged the governor and the secretary of state with telegrams and memorials against the law. A meeting of Indians from different places in Transvaal was held on 11 September 1906 at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg. Here Sheth Haji Habib made an impassioned speech and advocated resistance to the ordinance and to pledge in the name of God not to submit to the law. The significance of a solemn oath to resist an unjust law suddenly dawned upon Gandhi. Pointing out the gravity of the crisis for the Indian community in South Africa, he exhorted the Indians to stake their all 'in the face of conflagration' enveloping them. He agreed that the proper occasion for taking pledges had come, but he wanted everyone to think out for himself 'if he has the will and the ability to pledge himself'. 'Resolutions of this nature cannot be passed by a majority vote. Everyone must only search his own heart and if the inner voice assures him that he has the requisite strength to carry him through, only then he should pledge himself.' 'Everyone should pledge himself independently of others and understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do.' He did not hesitate to point out the worst for which everyone should be prepared:

We may have to go to jail, where we may be insulted. We may have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat and cold. Hard labour may be imposed on us, we may be flogged. We may be fined heavily and our property may be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today, we may be reduced to abject poverty tomorrow. We may be deported. . . . It is not at all impossible that we may have to endure every hardship that we can imagine and wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse.

He concluded: 'I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory.'⁷

With a roar of enthusiasm, the Transvaal Indians rose to take the pledge as satyagrahis, and a new political technique was born. At this meeting the term 'satyagraha' had not yet been conceived. Passive resistance was the first appellation used to describe the proposed method of combating the government. But Gandhi found it repugnant as passivity was not in his mind. A small prize was announced in *Indian*

Opinion to be awarded to anyone who suggested the best designation for the struggle. Maganlal Gandhi suggested 'sadagraha' which was changed to 'satyagraha' by Gandhi himself. The root meaning of satyagraha is 'holding on to Truth'. Truth (*satya*) implies Love, and firmness (*agraha*) serves as a synonym for force. 'Satyagraha' thus meant the force born of Truth and Love or non-violence. This was the genesis of the form of action which came to be known as satyagraha. Even in the earliest stages, Gandhi had discovered that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent; instead he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. It is impossible that what appears as truth for one may appear to be error to another. The doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self, i.e. self-suffering.

Gandhi distinguished between satyagraha and passive resistance in many ways equating it to the difference between the North Pole and the South Pole. Passive resistance was called a weapon of the weak, whereas satyagraha was a weapon of the strongest. The satyagrahis would never use force even when they were in a position to use it effectively. No thought is ever entertained of offering armed resistance. Satyagraha is soul force pure and simple and to the extent that there is room for use of arms or physical force, the possibility of the use of soul force would be reduced. The passive resister is basically not averse to the use of force but has no hope of success by force of arms. He is weak and hence offers passive resistance. Thus passive resistance is a weapon of the weak and the helpless; such resistance could never make them strong. Satyagrahis offer satyagraha believing themselves to be strong. Fostering the idea of strength, they would grow stronger and stronger every day. Just as there is no scope for love in passive resistance, similarly there is no scope for hatred or for physical force in satyagraha. Passive resistance may be offered side by side with the use of arms. Satyagraha and brute force, each being a negation of the other, can never go together. Satyagraha does not entertain the remotest idea of injuring the opponent; it postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person.⁸

Satyagraha was not tested immediately. A deputation of Gandhi and H.O. Ally, a merchant, was sent to convey the views of the Transvaal Indians to the authorities in London. Gandhi persuaded Lord Elgin, the Secretary for Colonies, to revise his opinion about the ordinance which was being presented as a measure advantageous for the Indians. Elgin wrote to Selborne: 'They [the Indians] have protested against the Ordinance on the ground that it actually aggravates the disabilities from which they at present suffer. . . . Under these circumstances . . . I think it expedient to announce at once that it is not proposed in the meantime

to proceed further with the measure.⁹ The British Colonial Office wanted to avoid embarrassment since the Act would have been the responsibility of the British Government. Elgin informed Selborne that a similar law could be passed in 1907 when Transvaal acquired a fully responsible government.

After popular elections in March 1907, Botha became the first prime minister and Smuts the Secretary for Colonies. Thus began the confrontation between Smuts, the acknowledged defender of white supremacy, and Gandhi 'the embarrassingly articulate reminder that the British empire must stand for the equality of all subjects of the crown'.

On 21 March 1907, the Transvaal Government converted the ordinance into an Act enforceable from 1 July. Indians were asked to get themselves registered by 31 July 1907. The British colonial office was totally unperturbed. Gandhi was deeply disappointed and saw through the trick played by Elgin who was not prepared to advise His Majesty to disallow the Act passed by the first elected representatives.¹⁰ The Indians did not object so much to re-registration as they did to the issuing of new certificates and the ten-digit fingerprinting which were now to be compulsory.

The Transvaal Indians of every walk of life combined under Gandhi's leadership to fight the common menace. Satyagraha was launched under the auspices of a Passive Resistance Association, since the term 'satyagraha' had not yet been coined. Peaceful picketing of registration offices was systematically organized. These moved from town to town with little or nothing to do. The time limit for registration was extended again and again. The *Indian Opinion* published the names of 'black legs' (Indians who had taken the certificate of registration). Gradually, more newspapers throughout the empire supported the cause of the Indians. Some people felt that the discrimination policy would be very bad for the British Empire in India. Many Indians, including Gandhi, were tried for disobedience of laws and sent to jail. Gandhi pleaded guilty and asked for maximum punishment. He was awarded two months' imprisonment with hard labour. Tolstoy observed that the Transvaal Satyagraha was the first attempt at applying the principle on a mass scale.

A compromise between Gandhi and Smuts was ultimately arrived at. Indians would get voluntarily registered and give fingerprints; anyone who considered it as derogatory need not give them. After voluntary registration, Smuts would repeal the Asiatic Act. The compromise did not please the entire Indian community and a Pathan, Mir Aalam, attacked Gandhi when he went to register himself voluntarily. Gandhi was severely mauled and it took him ten days to recover. Indians got themselves voluntarily registered. However the issue of Asians who had

been out of the Colony at the time of the compromise being registered under the Asiatic Law Amendment Act brought the issue back to the stage of struggle on a much more fundamental issue.

The repeal of Asiatic Law Amendment Act had been promised but was not carried out even though the voluntary registrations were legalized.¹¹ Ultimately, Gandhi and the Indian community informed the Government that if the Asiatic Act (Black Act) was not repealed by 16 August 1908, the certificates of registration would be burnt.

The Indian community began satyagraha, a struggle for its self respect, on 16 August 1908, when in a meeting outside the Hamidia Mosque in Johannesburg, some 3,000 Indians gathered and put their registration certificates and trading licences to fire. The registration and immigration problems had been merged into a single issue since failure to register or to produce a registration certificate on demand made an Indian a prohibited immigrant who could be expelled from Transvaal. Gandhi was determined to secure for Indians the right to immigrate to Transvaal on a basis of equality with other British subjects. He demanded that Transvaal should at least admit six educated Indians a year to keep the fiction of equality alive. A few Natal Indians entered Transvaal and were arrested. Other Indians courted arrest by hawking without licence or entering Transvaal without certificates. The Transvaal Government even resorted to transporting Indians to India. In October 1908, Gandhi was arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to £ 25 fine or two months' imprisonment with hard labour.

The deliberate breaking of the law by a whole community and the demand by the transgressors that they be allowed to suffer the maximum penalty was so novel and so foreign to the bureaucratic mind that it tended to produce panic. Less than 12,000 Indians in the whole Transvaal were able to 'essentially immobilise the colonial Government and to hold the attention of an entire empire'.¹² The Transvaal ministers tried to delude themselves into believing that the unrest was abating. But it was not so. A continuous stream of Indians poured into the jails. Meanwhile, the maintenance of the satyagrahis and their families was posing serious problems for Gandhi since the payment of monthly allowances could not continue for long. It was solved by the development of a co-operative commonwealth, when Kallenbach, one of Gandhi's admirers, purchased a farm of 1,100 acres and gave it to the satyagrahis for use. Gandhi called it Tolstoy Farm. It was only 2 miles away from a railway station and 21 miles away from Johannesburg.

Smuts conceded the essential right of six educated Indians to enter Transvaal under permanent certificates of registration, but he opposed the statutory provisions for immigration of Asiatics and Europeans on

an equal footing. In November 1909, despite great pressure on the Transvaal government, Gandhi had not won his point. With the formation of the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910, the issue was centralized. The struggle continued. The ranks of the satyagrahis were thinning out, and the government was also under increasing pressure. In October-November 1912, G.K. Gokhale visited South Africa as a state guest. He, after discussions with the government, informed Gandhi that the Black Act would be repealed, racial bar on immigration and the £ 3 tax would be removed. Gandhi was not sure that the promise would be kept.

In March 1913, Justice Searle of Cape Supreme Court gave a judgment in which all marriages not registered by the Registrar of Marriages and not in accordance with Christian rites were declared null and void. This terrible judgment reduced Indian women, legally married, to the status of concubines. A new phase of satyagraha began in September 1913, which included indentured labourers and women as participants. The indentured miners and railway employees went on strike. A peaceful march from Phoenix Farm in Natal to Transvaal was organized and women courted imprisonment along with men. The satyagraha began to have an effect all over the British Empire. In South Africa itself the government was criticized for its policies. In November 1913, Lord Hardinge severely criticized the South African Government, defended the 'satyagrahis' civil disobedience of unjust and invidious legislation and called for the appointment of an impartial committee. When a railway strike by the European employees threatened to embarrass the South African Government in January 1914, Gandhi offered to suspend the satyagraha during the period of the European employees strike. The satyagrahis would not like to take advantage of the other party's difficulties. This left an indelible impression on the adversary.¹³

Ultimately, General Smuts appointed a commission to enquire into Indian grievances and assured Gandhi that they would be removed. Gandhi trusted Smuts although some of his friends warned him that he was being deceived. But, as a true satyagrahi, he reposed his trust in his adversary so long as there were no cogent reasons to distrust him. Relying on his own strength, he would not mind being betrayed by the adversary; he would trust him because, by so doing, he strengthened the forces of truth and brought victory nearer. Distrust is a sign of weakness and satyagraha implies the banishment of all weakness and distrust. Finally Smuts passed a law validating marriages held legal in India, abolishing the £ 3 annual licence tax, validating the domicile certificates issued by the Government of India for entry into South Africa.¹⁴ Although some restrictions on trade and interprovincial migra-

tion remained, the essential demands of the satyagrahis had been met. Gandhi left South Africa for India via England in July 1914.

2. Success at Champaran

The Gandhi of 1893 had been transformed considerably during the 21 years that he had spent in Africa. His whole way of life had undergone change and he had evolved his own original political philosophy and a new technique of political agitation. After reaching India he, under instructions from Gokhale, 'remained on probation' for a year before speaking on Indian questions. He founded the 150-acre Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad where the inmates took vows of truth, *ahimsa*, charity, fearlessness and anti-untouchability. The ashram was to be a laboratory in which Gandhi would experiment with his ideas. It was also to be a 'military' academy for training soldiers for launching satyagraha. The ashram was also meant to provide workers for constructive activities between spells of satyagraha. Experiments in the weaving of khadi were carried out at the ashram during 1915-16 and each inmate had to clothe himself in cloth made of yarn spun by himself.

After travelling extensively for two years, Gandhi devoted himself first of all to the problems of backward peasants and ignorant labourers. In this process he further developed his technique of satyagraha and acquainted people with its method and scope. He came to know of the deplorable condition of the Champaran indigo cultivators in 1916 at the Congress session; he refused to move a resolution for them at that time unless he had verified the facts and knew the truth first-hand.

Gandhi was able to reach Muzaffarpur on 10 April 1917 to study the situation of the Champaran peasants, a large number of whom had been oppressed so long that they had become spiritless, demoralized and too frightened to complain against the powerful planters. Before he started his inquiry he thought it proper to apprise the other party — the government and the planters — of what he was going to do. Gandhi met the commissioner of the division and the secretary of the Planters Association. He explained, as a satyagrahi, the purpose of his visit to Champaran. They tried to dissuade him in various ways from undertaking the work, but the more they tried to dissuade him, the more firm became his resolve to visit the district.

Gandhi obtained the help of a few friends to act as interpreters of the local Bhojpuri dialect and to take down evidence furnished by the peasants. When Gandhi left Motihari to go to the interior he was called back and served an official order to leave the area. On 18 April 1917 he appeared before the magistrate, disobeyed the order to quit the district and resolved to persist in his work. The peasants came to the trial court at Motihari, breaking the police cordon. Fear of the police had given

place to courage and enthusiasm. Gandhi had set an example of fearlessly defying the British Government. He declared:

As a law abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I came. . . . I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life of India a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting examples. . . . I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience.¹⁵

He offered to suffer the maximum punishment which the law permitted for his disobedience of government orders. The judgment by the magistrate was postponed. Meanwhile, the lieutenant governor pulled up the commissioner who had directed the magistrate to act as he had done and the case was withdrawn. The local officials were instructed to extend all help to Gandhi.

In Champaran, Gandhi propagated and taught fearlessness and truthfulness to the peasants and farmers who had been browbeaten so far. The impact was tremendous and could be seen when they came in hundreds to tell their tale of woe and suffering. They highlighted the evils of the *tin-kathia* system, according to which they had to keep apart three-twentieth of their land holdings (often the most fertile land) for the cultivation of indigo which was sold to the planter at a fixed price. The peasants were pressurized and coerced into agreements to do so. The influence which the planters enjoyed with the English bureaucracy combined with the delays, uncertainties, expense and complexities of the legal system made it impossible for the peasants to obtain a fair deal.

Gandhi, by his example, inspired lawyers with established practice to consider going to jail for the cause of the peasants whom Gandhi was serving. The idea of voluntarily going to jail was a novel one not only for the few local leaders like Mazharul Haq, Braj Kishor, Rajendra Prasad and others, but for the entire country.¹⁶ Even the revolutionaries who carried their lives in their hands kept open a door for escape.

The fear of the police, of administrative authority, felt even by lawyers and other educated persons was destroyed by Gandhi by various examples of firmness (*agraha*) in decision and action set by him during the Champaran affair. These had a lasting impact on people who could now complain against a planter without fear and refuse to carry out his wishes. Gandhi's uprightness in dealing with government officials was also remarkable. On one occasion he refused to look at a report obtained from a government servant secretly. He also informed the magistrate that documents marked secret were being shown to every one of his co-workers, and thus taught truth in action.¹⁷

Gandhi used to meet the planters also, if they so desired, during the process of inquiry. Some planters tried but failed to produce convincing evidence of their good behaviour towards their peasants. They raised various obstacles in his path but he was undeterred. They tried to malign his efforts in different ways but they failed. On 20 May 1917, Gandhi said: 'Nothing but physical force from the Government or an absolute guarantee that the admitted or provable wrongs of the ryot are to stop for ever can possibly remove us from the district... if we withdraw at this stage, we would stand condemned before man and God, and, what is most important of all, we would never be able to forgive ourselves.'¹⁸

When Gandhi's presence in Champaran had injected fearlessness among the peasants, the government became nervous. From 4 to 6 June, Gandhi was called to meet the lieutenant governor and his executive council members at Ranchi. The Government of India asked them to appoint an official inquiry committee, lest Gandhi should begin a satyagraha struggle on the indigo question. After some resistance, the lieutenant governor on 13 June appointed a committee under the chairmanship of F.G. Sly, Commissioner of the Central Provinces, to inquire into the grievances of the peasants. Gandhi, as the representative of the peasants, was one of its members.

A most difficult task of satyagraha in action was to get the committee round to the submission of a unanimous report so that the government would have to accept it. Gandhi showed how a satyagrahi's absence of ill-will towards his opponents worked. He avoided condemnation of acts of oppression in the past since no good could come out of it. The *tin-kathia* system of cultivation, the root cause of all the peasants' troubles, was to be abolished by law. The enhancement of rent was reduced by one-fourth and the amount was to be paid back by the government on behalf of the British Raj and the planters.¹⁹

Gandhi had shown considerable patience and broad-mindedness, qualities essential to a satyagrahi in understanding the other man's point of view. He pointed out that, with the abolition of the *tin-kathia* system and the fearlessness generated among the peasantry, the planters' oppression could not continue, and so it happened. The mass awakening generated by Gandhi's satyagraha 'breathed a new life among the masses' throughout Bihar, who had benefited quickly and had seen the accomplishment by his methods of something which had been considered impossible.²⁰

3. A Strike and a No-tax Campaign

In Champaran, Gandhi used satyagraha to rouse the dumb and weak peasants and made them fearless. He soon got an opportunity to

experiment with his method in a different sphere. In the latter half of 1917 the mill-owners of Ahmedabad, with a view to retaining the workers at work, paid a plague bonus (75-80 per cent of their wages) over and above their salary. After the plague was over, because of the considerable price rise during the war period, the workers resisted the employers' attempt to withdraw the bonus. To avoid a conflict between the mill-owners and the workers, it was agreed to refer the matter to arbitration. Before the arbitration committee could begin its deliberations, the mill-owners took advantage of a stray labour strike and backed out of the arbitration and announced that the workers who did not accept a bonus of 20 per cent would be dismissed. Gandhi, after studying the relevant data, reached the conclusion that a 35 per cent bonus was justified. The workers accepted, but the mill-owners refused to agree to this.

The mill-owners threatened to take 'united action' and terminate the services of all workers who did not return to work. Gandhi took up the workers' cause as another experiment in satyagraha. The crucial question was whether a just demand of the workers could be secured by a peaceful non-violent method. Gandhiji organized the strike on the principles of satyagraha. Hatred and violence against the adversary (either mill-owners or black-legs) would be avoided, and bread would be earned by honest labour. The strikers were to be kept busy in learning new trades and constructive activities. They pledged themselves not to resume work until either their terms were accepted or the mill-owners agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration. Gandhi's chief lieutenant in this strike was Anasuyabehn, sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, a leading mill-owner. Every day Gandhi held meetings of the workers at a fixed hour and advocated that the relationship between a factory owner and his workers should be based on 'mutual regard' and not on 'self-interest'. The mill-owners looked upon Gandhi's activity as outside interference in their 'private' domain.

The strike was prolonged. After 20 days, Gandhi began to feel worried because the morale of the workers began to sag and they even began to be critical of Gandhi's non-violent efforts. Had they indulged in violence, they argued, they would have got what they wanted within a few days. This appeared to Gandhi as a victory of Satan and he was faced with the imperative need to brace up the spirits of the labourers by any fair means available and to demonstrate the ability of his non-violent satyagraha to solve the issue. The importance of honouring a solemn pledge had to be taught. On 15 March 1918, he announced a fast on behalf of the workers, to set an example in self-suffering before them.²¹ The fast had an electrifying effect in buoying the spirit of the workers and their determination to keep their pledge of continuing their non-

violent strike till their demands were met. Gandhi knew that the fast was likely to act as a pressurizing influence on the mill-owners, but he considered the honouring of a solemn pledge by ten thousand workers to be more important than anything else. Some of the workers were ready to break their pledge out of fear of starvation. By his fast he wanted to show the value he attached to the honouring of a pledge. After three days, the mill-owners agreed to arbitration. The final settlement was honourable to both the parties. The workers were to be paid, on the first day, a 35 per cent bonus in accordance with the workers' pledge, on the second day, 20 per cent in accordance with the mill-owners' pledge, and, from the third day onwards, 27.5 per cent bonus, which would be adjusted in accordance with the decision of the arbitrators. The strike had been resolved without bitterness. The honour of both had been upheld. The real victory consisted in that a serious dispute between the two parties had been settled not by resort to a strike but by arbitration, which had not been earlier accepted by the mill-owners.

Gandhi decried all attempts to demand wages for the strike period because it would be tantamount to having fought the struggle with the employers' money. A satyagrahi warrior must fight on his own strength.²² The only thing which troubled Gandhi was the pressure which the fast exerted on the mill-owners. He knew that this pressure had vitiated his fast to a certain extent. But the Ahmedabad strike had effectively demonstrated the relevance of satyagraha in industrial relations. This strike had a far-reaching impact in as much as arbitration began to be considered an alternative method of resolving industrial disputes.

Simultaneously with the labour dispute in Ahmedabad, Gandhi was involved in advocating the interests of the peasants of Kheda (Kaira) district in Gujarat which had been afflicted by excessive late rainfall in 1917, causing a serious fall in the output of some crops. The revenue code provided for a total remission of government revenue demand if the crop yield was less than 25 per cent of the average yield. The patidars and the peasants submitted petitions to the government that the yield had been less than 25 per cent of the norm and hence the revenue collection should be suspended. The government did not accept this.

Leading members of the Servants of India Society and the Bombay Legislative Council had made inquiries into the matter and had sent their estimates of the crop yield (which were less than 25 per cent) to Pratt, Commissioner of the Northern Division. Even this was not accepted. The Gujarat Sabha made inquiries, cross-examined the villagers, and came to the conclusion that the peasants' viewpoint was

correct. It therefore made a representation and sent a deputation to the Bombay Government supporting the peasants' demand. On Gandhi's advice, on 10 January 1918, the Sabha asked the peasants to suspend payment of revenue. The Collector of Kheda and the Bombay Government challenged the locus standi of the Sabha and described its advice as 'thoughtless and mischievous' and threatened the peasants with severe penalties, including confiscation of lands and attachment of property if they did not pay the government revenue.²³

Gandhi now entered the scene, called on the Bombay Governor, acquainted him with all the facts, and requested him to appoint an inquiry commission with representatives of both the sides to serve on it or else accept the popular view. This request was turned down on 9 February 1918. Gandhi, with the help of a number of public workers, carried out inquiries and cross-examined the peasants of about 400 villages in the district. He was convinced that the yield had been less than four annas in the rupee (16 annas) and hence the peasants were entitled to full remission of the revenue demand. On 22 March 1918 Gandhi made a last appeal to the commissioner to suspend the realization of the second instalment of land revenue in the district. This was not accepted.

Gandhi, having exhausted all available means of redress of the grievance, advised the *patidars* (landholders) 'to resort to satyagraha' against this vindictiveness and tyranny and to refuse to pay the land revenue. They were urged to take a pledge to this effect on 22 March 1918 and become satyagrahis resolved to face any action government might take against them, and to suffer the consequences of their non-payment. Only if the government agreed to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the district, would such amongst them, as were in a position to pay, pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that might be due. The reason why the well-to-do amongst the peasants would not pay right away was that, if they did, the needy ones would, out of fright, have to sell their chattel or incur debts to pay the revenue. It was the duty of the well-to-do to protect the needy against such a contingency.²⁴

Gandhi held that the World War was no excuse for injustice and oppression. When the commissioner, later on, blamed Gandhi for raising an issue at a time when it could be perilous to the empire, Gandhi held the commissioner guilty of 'bringing in the War to defend his position' and considered his attitude to be 'a peril far greater than the German peril' to the British empire. Gandhi had evaluated the truth of the complaint of the peasants and was satisfied that they were not in a position to pay the land revenue. When the commissioner threatened confiscation of lands and attachment of property, Gandhi argued that it

would be better to lose all by not paying the revenue than to pay it through fear and prove themselves false. The government would respect popular opinion only if people resisted in this way and showed that it was 'impossible to govern without their consent'. Gandhi had no desire to seek relief by bringing pressure on government but only sought to awaken its sense of justice by means of voluntary suffering.

This was the first agrarian satyagraha which Gandhi had organized to rid the peasantry of fears of officials and of forfeiture of land and property. The struggle, in reality, concerned an all-important issue underlying the question of land revenue. Swaraj, he wrote even at that time, could be obtained only 'if we become absolutely fearless'. The struggle was not simply for escaping payment of land revenue for the year 1918, it had the much more important objective of bringing home to the government the lesson that it ought to yield to the people when they were right. The ryots were fighting for this principle and the authorities for their prestige.²⁵ If the government always insisted that it was in the right and people in the wrong, it only indicated a state of slavery. The people's will was pitted against the government's. This stubbornness of the people was in a right cause and hence was satyagraha.

The struggle, though apparently for a little relief in terms of money, was in the nature of a foundation for a future democratic structure. On different occasions Gandhi emphasized the far-reaching consequences of the struggle. Even Pratt conceded that the struggle involved the interests of 30 crores of people. It was a struggle between the will of the people and the prestige of officials. In other words, a foundation for the struggle for self-government. Gandhi fought the government by encouraging the people to suffer voluntarily. The patidars were advised to fight on to the last and compel the government to bow to public opinion. Gandhi assured them that, if they could do so, swaraj would be in the hollow of their palm.

The government also tightened the revenue collection measures and resorted to force and coercion. Those who refused to pay were sternly dealt with; cattle and household goods were seized and standing crops were attached. The repression was very severe but the peasantry showed much courage and fortitude. The government realized that its policy was reacting against its own interests because the people virtually made the life of government officials miserable by non-cooperation. The struggle continued for four months before the government realized the wisdom in accepting the main demand of the peasants. It ultimately agreed that, if the well-to-do patidars paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension of revenue collection. The people's pledge had been fulfilled.

The Kheda Satyagraha succeeded completely. The government decision to suspend the realization of the land revenue was announced in a very casual manner and only as if it were a sequel to a government circular of an earlier date which had not been acted upon. Gandhi said that the government decision had not been graceful, but he had shown the people the relevance of his technique of satyagraha in settling mutual disputes, in setting right a wrongful exploitation sanctioned by law and usage, and in forcing the government to withdraw from a stand firmly taken. Thus sufficient ground had been prepared for applying this technique on a large scale in India's struggle for freedom. An opportunity to do so soon came on the issue of the Rowlatt Bills, although Gandhi had also been thinking of satyagraha on the issue of the release of the Ali Brothers. But the passing of the Rowlatt Act provided an opportunity for launching a mass satyagraha and an occasion for refining the technique of non-violent resistance still further.

4. Satyagraha on a National Scale

The Rowlatt Committee was appointed by the Government of India in December 1917 to suggest ways and means to combat terrorist and 'anarchist activities. In its report it recommended trial in camera, without a right of appeal, demanding security deposits from persons likely to commit offences; arrests on mere suspicion, and far-reaching permanent changes in the criminal law. One of the two bills introduced on the basis of the report was passed into law with indecent haste on 21 March 1919, with all the Indian members of the Legislative Assembly voting against the bill.

Gandhi, seriously ill during November 1918-February 1919, had earlier hoped that the Rowlatt Bills would not become law. He considered them 'aggravated symptoms of a deep seated disease' among the ruling class. In February 1919 he informed the viceroy of his resolve to launch satyagraha against them. He was determined to launch an agitation, 'the like of which the British had never witnessed before'.

Gandhi considered these bills so subversive of 'liberty and justice' and so destructive of the 'elementary rights of individuals' that opposition to them could be expressed either according to the western model of a violent agitation or the Indian model of non-violent resistance. While launching a satyagraha against these bills, the uppermost consideration in his mind was the need to take an 'effective step' to end terrorism. He argued that 'true *paurusha* consisted in driving out the brute in us'. He wanted to provide an effective non-violent means of remedying injustice which would wean Indian youth away from the cult of political violence that was increasingly being adopted by them in the face of imperialist oppression.²⁶ He stressed that satyagraha alone could prevent 'the ambi-

tious and high spirited youths' from resorting to violence.²⁷ His attempt to channellize violent agitation into non-violent satyagraha cannot be over-emphasized. He pointed out that satyagraha was a religious force and advocated faith in the inviolable and immutable force of the spirit. Sometimes he held that the relevance of satyagraha lay in its capacity to save India from Bolshevism or an even worse fate. He repeatedly highlighted its superiority to and greater potency than violence, whether secret or open, for achieving reform.²⁸

This was the first occasion when Gandhi launched a mass satyagraha, to be offered by people throughout the length and breadth of India. He had experimented sufficiently with the technique since 1906 in different situations in South Africa, and India, and was so convinced of the superiority of the technique that he launched mass satyagraha without much preparation. He believed that the forces of Truth and *ahimsa* need only be set in motion for them to gather momentum on their own, and that, in no time, they would permeate millions of people. Despite his weak health, he toured different places to acquaint the masses with satyagraha, its obligations and implications. He wanted people to have positive faith in the efficacy of this technique.

A Satyagraha Sabha was organized to oppose the Rowlatt Bills. A small Satyagraha Committee of experts was entrusted with the selection of laws against which mass satyagraha was to be offered. The control exercised by the Satyagraha Sabha and the committee would be enough, Gandhi hoped, to keep the agitation non-violent.

A Satyagraha Sabha drafted a pledge to be signed by people willing to offer satyagraha. It had three parts. The first declared the Rowlatt Bills to be 'unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals'. The second consisted of the pledge proper in which the satyagrahi vowed 'to disobey certain laws'. In the third part he asserted his fearless adherence to Truth and *ahimsa*. The pledge and the control over the selection of laws for violation were most significant as they constituted a check upon 'individual' satyagraha. The Moderate nationalists, less militant in their attitude to British policies, were brought round by the argument that the Montford reforms should be judged in the light of the Rowlatt legislation. If this great obstacle was not removed, the reforms would prove to be a 'whitened sepulchre'.²⁹

When the Rowlatt Bill, 'a piece of devilish legislation', was passed, it became the *causa causans* for Gandhi's announcement that the second Sunday after the publication of the viceroy's assent (i.e. 6 April 1919) should be observed as a day of humiliation and prayer. He asked people to observe a 24-hour fast with a view, not so much to exert pressure on

the government, as to discipline the satyagrahis and to equip them with necessary firmness for civil disobedience. It was to be a token of the intensity of their wounded feelings. The fast was not a hunger-strike but an act of self-denial. All work was to be suspended for the day. Markets and other business places would be closed. Public meetings would be held in all parts of India to pass resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act. All the three things which the people were asked to do on 6 April were acts of self-denial, self-discipline and education.³⁰ This self-suffering was the keynote of satyagraha.

Gandhi insisted that those who joined satyagraha demonstrations should refrain from violence. If the movement could not be conducted without violence, it would have to be abandoned. If violence erupted, satyagraha against 'ourselves' by fasting might also be offered. The people had to learn how to observe perfect peace and undergo suffering. It would be considered a breach of discipline to endeavour to secure the release of those who had committed deeds of violence.

The Satyagraha Sabha advised people to civilly disobey laws regarding prohibited literature and registration of newspapers. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, *Sarvodaya*, *Story of a Satyagrahi* — books consistent with satyagraha — were selected for distribution. Only such laws were selected for civil breach as would constitute an education for the people, and until the satyagrahis became seasoned, disciplined and capable of handling delicately organized movements, only selected individual disobedience would be practised. The literature was to be publicly sold. Similarly, at every satyagraha centre, a manuscript newspaper was to be published without registering it. It could be of even one page or even half a foolscap page. Every satyagrahi was to make handwritten copies of that newspaper and circulate them.

At Delhi news of the viceroy's assent became public on 22 March and the people observed the fast and hartal on second Sunday after that, i.e. on 30 March. This was the first occasion on which all sections of the people unitedly observed hartal, fast and total suspension of work. Since the people were not well trained, or properly educated about satyagraha, some violence did occur. But the responsibility for the violence lay with the local authorities in Delhi who had used 'a Nasmyth Hammer to crush a fly'.³¹ Gandhi asked the satyagrahis 'to invite imprisonment' and to demonstrate their law-abiding nature. Only such laws were to be disobeyed as the committee would decide. The people participating in this movement would not force action on those who did not agree with them; even refusal to disperse when a magistrate ordered this would not be proper because the Satyagraha Committee had not suggested disobedience to that law — let people be imprisoned for demonstrating their law-abiding nature. The day of the all-India fast and

hartal, 6 April 1919, also became a day of mourning for the Delhi tragedy of 30 March, when satyagrahis were killed as a result of police firing.

This day, 6 April 1919 passed off comparatively peacefully. Gandhi was not allowed to enter either Delhi or Punjab. But 13 April 1919 witnessed the gruesome tragedy at Jallianwala Bagh followed by the reign of terror in Punjab. Gandhi was confined to the Bombay Province when violence occurred at Ahmedabad and Viramgam and other places. This greatly disturbed Gandhi who had launched the movement to curb the spirit of violence. He realized that the people would be cowed down by violence and feel defeated. Hence the Rowlatt Satyagraha was temporarily suspended on 18 April 1919 because of the lack of understanding among the people of the real significance of non-violence. Gandhi realized his mistake in not having visualized this reaction and called it a Himalayan miscalculation.³² Thereafter, he directed his energies to educating people in the philosophy of non-violent satyagraha. The restraining influence of satyagraha was powerful enough to control the anger of the people against the Black Act. In Punjab, the government atrocities put an unbearable strain on this restraining influence and forced it to give way. If the Punjab administration had co-operated with people as other provincial governments did, the violence and terrible sufferings that followed would have been avoided.

Gandhi's temporary suspension of satyagraha was not because of 'less faith in its efficacy' but because the forces of evil had been underrated at the time of embarking on the mass movement. He felt that he should not allow satyagraha to become an occasion for feeding violence or for embittering relations between the English and the Indians. He now asked the satyagrahis to assist the authorities in restoring order and in curbing lawlessness. The period of suspension would further discipline the satyagrahis in an enlightened and willing obedience to the laws of the state. The right of civil resistance is derived from the duty of obedience voluntarily performed. Non-violent satyagraha could be put to versatile uses; at times it consisted, he argued, in civil disobedience and at other times in civil obedience; at times in declaring hartal, or holding large public meetings or arranging processions and at other times in refraining from any one or all of those things. Satyagraha consisted not merely, or even chiefly, in civilly resisting laws, but mainly in promoting national welfare by strict adherence to Truth.³³ Gandhi hoped that the suspension of civil resistance would hasten the end of the Rowlatt legislation, since the government would have an opportunity to realize its futility.

Gandhi advocated that satyagraha was based upon the teachings of ancient Indian civilization; that its acceptance would demonstrate the superiority of that civilization. Satyagraha generated force derived from

insistence on Truth, which alone would end the evil of Rowlatt Act. He firmly asserted that disturbances were no part of satyagraha. He who abides by Truth does not wish to harm anybody. Civil disobedience of law can only be practised by one who adheres to Truth and Non-violence. When Truth and Non-violence have been grasped, civil disobedience of law would be restarted. In this movement the proper thing was to be arrested and imprisoned, and the people should not be angry when any satyagrahi was arrested. The satyagrahis should not do a single thing that would bring about or encourage violence; they ought to prevent such untoward results by every means at their disposal. The victory of satyagraha is attainable only by adherence to Truth, by suffering and by avoiding violence.

The movement had been launched, he pointed out, so that the nation could rise higher by undergoing discipline and learning to exert soul-force. When people had become disciplined and could remain calm in the face of provocation, could curb anger, handle processions with self-restraint, and bring about hartals without threats or violence — when satyagraha volunteers had been so trained that the people would listen to and act according to their instructions, the just demands of the people would become irresistible.³⁴ A hartal brought about voluntarily and without pressure was a powerful means of showing popular disapproval. A fast when undertaken in a religious spirit, demonstrating grief, would induce even the hardest hearts to give it a favourable response. Fasting is a great discipline; those who voluntarily fast become gentle and purified by it. When lakhs of people voluntarily abstain from food, such a fast would become a very powerful prayer, ennobling individuals and nations. It is not the intention of a fasting satyagrahi to exercise pressure upon the government.

Victory attained by violence could only be momentary; it would lead to an increase of ill will between the parties, and each would prepare to give fresh battle to the other; thus it would not be permanent and could lead to a defeat also. There could be no such untoward end to satyagraha. A satyagrahi, by reason of suffering for his principles, would draw universal sympathy, melting even the heart of the so-called enemy.

5. Civil Disobedience and the Khilafat Demands

Gandhi informed the viceroy in June of his intention to resume civil disobedience in July 1919, but on receipt of some government assurances he withdrew the call, hoping that the Rowlatt Act would soon be repealed. Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence was increasing since he was confident that the strongest physical force would bend before moral force when used in defence of truth. In October 1919, he compared

violence to a broken reed and civil resistance, i.e. resistance by suffering, to an 'unbreakable and elevating weapon'.

The issue of Khilafat had been agitating Muslim minds after the surrender of Turkey in 1918; it now began to attract Gandhi's increasing attention. By May 1919 he had begun to feel that the Khilafat wrong was even greater than the injustice of the Rowlatt legislation.³⁵ He was in full sympathy with Indian Muslim sentiment in favour of the Khilafat, since the British had gone back on certain pledges solemnly given during the war. His early association with the Ali Brothers (for whose release he had at one time thought of starting a satyagraha), Maulana Abdul Bari of Firingi Mahal, and Hasrat Mohani, made him aware of the deep emotional and religious sentiments generated by the Khilafat question, as also of the 'violent' trend in the thinking of the Muslim leaders. The latter was analogous to the situation on the eve of the Rowlatt Satyagraha, and Gandhi tried his best to guide the Khilafat agitation along non-violent channels. He saw the danger of the Muslims either resorting to violence in desperation or emigrating on a large scale in utter helplessness. It was only by patient reasoning that Gandhi convinced them that the successful use of violence was an impossibility. He succeeded also in weaning away the Muslims from violence on utilitarian grounds.

A large section of the Muslims was not willing to limit itself to non-violent means as it considered non-violence to be a weapon of the weak, at best an expedient only.³⁶ Gandhi persuaded them to agree that non-violent non-cooperation was the only weapon available in the war of direct action. Despite the fact that their viewpoint was different from his, he invited them to give his method a trial and reconciled himself in the belief that 'the use of a pure weapon even from a mistaken motive' would not fail to produce some good. When Muslim leaders thought of using boycott of English goods as a weapon, Gandhi suggested swadeshi because the former was a violent while the latter was a non-violent weapon. The two were at opposite poles.³⁷

By January 1920 the Muslim leadership had agreed to wage non-violent non-cooperation for Khilafat demands which had by now become 'the question of questions'.³⁸ In March 1920, Gandhi moved the Khilafat Conference to agree that there 'shall be no resort to violence whether in speech or deed'. The Muslims reserved to themselves the right to resort to all such methods as they thought fit in the event of failure of the non-violent Non-cooperation Movement. Gandhi argued that while co-operation with a just government was a duty; non-cooperation with an unjust government was equally a duty.³⁹ It was being adopted as a means to make the present government just. Gandhi's success lay in preventing an outbreak of violence by his

advocacy of non-cooperation, which was powerful enough to express the Muslim feelings and provide redress. Counsels of despair might well have dominated the Muslims in the absence of the alternative of non-cooperation. Gandhi did not mince words and said that violence would kill the Khilafat Non-cooperation Movement.

For Gandhi the significance of Khilafat issue lay in converting the Muslim community to the adoption of non-violent non-cooperation as a sheet anchor. In October 1919 he considered the wide acceptance of satyagraha as the greatest achievement of the last one year.⁴⁰ If he could persuade the Muslims in general also to adopt non-violence as their policy, the acceptability of his weapon of satyagraha by the nation would have been complete. It is for this reason that he launched the Non-cooperation Movement on 1 August 1920 without waiting for its approval by the National Congress.

It is historically and substantially incorrect to say that Gandhi launched the Khilafat Non-cooperation Movement primarily with a view to buying 'Muslim friendship'. The appeal to Hindus to co-operate with Muslims became pressing after the Khilafatists had committed themselves to non-violent non-cooperation. Even before launching the Non-cooperation Movement, he had said: 'I would be false to my whole life if, even for securing Hindu-Muslim unity, if I compromised the principle of non-violence.'⁴¹ He repeatedly declared that 'if the Muhammadans remain true to their declared intention and are able to exercise self-restraint and make sacrifices', the Hindus 'will play the game'.⁴² This point is being emphasized here to stress the importance of non-violence in Gandhi's scheme of things. In his heart of hearts, he knew that non-cooperation practised by the masses was attended with grave risks but, as he wrote, 'not to run some risks now will be to court much greater risks, if not virtual destruction of law and order'. The tune in the non-violent Non-cooperation Movement had to be called by the Muslims. Before the Muslims acted, the Hindus did not need to do anything.

Gandhi succeeded in persuading the Muslim leaders to confine themselves to non-violent non-cooperation with the British Government since their grievances over Khilafat were not being redressed. During the process of advocacy of non-violent methods before the Muslim leaders, he laid emphasis, greater than he had done earlier, on the concept that non-violence is not a weapon of the weak and that only the strong can fight with non-violent weapons.⁴³ It was a wrong understanding of non-violent struggle, he pointed out, to equate it with cowardice. Gandhi was categorical in saying that 'when there is a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her

dishonour. Non-violence is infinitely superior to violence'. While insisting on non-violence, he emphatically denied being a visionary and claimed himself to be inherently practical. His main argument was that 'non-violence is the law of the human species just as violence is the law of the animal world. Strength in man does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will, 'the strength of the spirit'. The emphasis during this period was on the inner strength and not physical strength of the satyagrahis. He did not plead for India to practise non-violence because it was weak; instead non-violence was to be practised because of a consciousness of her strength and power. No training in arms was required for realization of her strength.

Gandhi was keen to show that a non-violent agitation was superior to a violent one. When in November 1920 the government refrained from instituting criminal action against those who had been non-violent, Gandhi declared that this was 'a triumph of peaceful war, i.e. non-violence'.⁴ Had the struggle been carried on violently or secretly by advocating assassination or the burning down of buildings or removing railway tracks, it would neither have succeeded in educating public opinion nor would it have acquired the strength to speak out the truth courageously. The non-violent struggle was being fought through the force of love and reason, obliging the government also to rely on reason. Someone raised the question: How could a votary of non-violence fight to sustain an institution [Khilafat] committed to resort to physical force for its defence? Gandhi replied that a believer in non-violence pledged himself not to resort to violence or physical force either directly or indirectly in defence of anything, but he was not precluded from helping men or institutions that in themselves were not based on non-violence. If the reverse were the case, helping India to attain swaraj would also be wrong because the future parliament of India under swaraj would also have some military and police forces. Such an argument would reduce all commercial activity by a believer in non-violence to an impossibility. Belief in non-violence meant refraining from any violence oneself. It would be promoting violence if, finding the Muslims to be in the right, non-violent force could not be used against those who had treacherously deprived them of certain legitimate rights.

6. The Philosophy of Ahimsa

Gandhi admitted that violence was also a law of nature, like non-violence, but he preferred non-violence because it represented a higher value since man, throughout history, has been progressing towards *ahimsa*. Since mankind has progressed, it has to progress still further towards that goal. 'Nothing in this world is stable, everything is Kinetic'. His preference for non-violence was based on his evaluation of

ultimate values made with reference to the conception of immanent Love which is an attribute of an immanent and transcendental God.⁴⁵ Gandhi's belief in a soul, separable from the body, led him to value non-violence more than life. All life in the flesh exists because of previously committed *himsa*, hence a 'votary of *ahimsa* will pray for deliverance from the bondage of flesh'.⁴⁶

Non-violence or *ahimsa* is not a negative concept. In fact non-violence is not a very appropriate translation of the word *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* implies the positive value of Love besides the negative value of abstinence from harming other living beings. In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. Gandhi identified *ahimsa* and Love. The inseparable combination of Truth and Love formed the nucleus of the Gandhian solution to the problem of means. 'Without *ahimsa* it is not possible to seek and find truth.' *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. Once he wrote: 'Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says "Find it through me". When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says "Find it through me".'⁴⁷ Nevertheless, *ahimsa* is the means and truth is the end. The testing of truth can be performed only by a refusal to do harm and by a strict adherence to *ahimsa* which is the supreme value, the one cognizable standard by which true action can be determined. Gandhi admitted error, indecision and miscalculation on various occasions, but the one principle to which he adhered to the end was the theme of *ahimsa*. 'Ahimsa is an ideal which we have to reach and it is an ideal to be reached even at this very moment, if we are capable of doing so. But it is not a proposition in geometry to be learnt by heart... it is infinitely more difficult than solving mathematical problems.'⁴⁸

In the negative sense, non-violence is a state of harmlessness and absence of hatred or ill will. It does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires one to resist the wrong-doer by disassociating oneself from him even though it may offend him or injure oneself. The non-violent man will bear suffering without the slightest thought of anger or hatred towards the oppressor. Injustice by the oppressor will not be acquiesced in but resisted actively.

Non-violence in its dynamic aspect involves conscious suffering. Self-suffering is directed, first of all, towards the moral persuasion of one because of whom it has been undertaken. It is not a substitute for violent means resorted to in view of one's inability to use the latter to achieve victory over an opponent; it is not a 'weapon of the weak'. Self-suffering is very different from cowardice. It is not to be practised indiscriminately. 'Suffering injury in one's own person is the essence of non-

violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others.' The resort to self-sacrifice and voluntary submission to injury is a positive policy, and is not a matter of last resort.

Another significant aspect of non-violence is its distinction from cowardice. The very first condition for practising ahimsa is to 'overcome all fear'. Non-violence was to be a conscious and deliberate restraint upon one's desire for vengeance which is born of fear of imaginary or real harm. Ahimsa, Gandhi pointed out, is the extreme limit of forgiveness, which itself is the quality of the brave. 'Non-violence is never demoralizing whereas cowardice always is.' He often chastised people who, out of fear, behaved non-violently. It was better to resist with violence than to flee in fear. When a woman is assaulted, her primary duty is self-protection by every means. It is a wrong understanding of non-violence to equate it with cowardice. Gandhi was categorical in saying that 'When there is a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. . . . I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should submit in a cowardly manner or remain a helpless witness to her dishonour.'⁴⁹

He had no use for the non-violence of the stone, of one who would not be roused even when kicked; no use, either, for the non-violence of the brute who, when someone strikes it, runs to injure the person. It is cold strength that was required. 'So long as we have not acquired it, we shall not be considered fit for swaraj.' His non-violence was not conditional on the government remaining non-violent. It would be true non-violence only if, even under a shower of bullets or with bombs dropping from aeroplanes, people went on working peacefully and did not rush to kill someone or burn post offices. When such non-violence had been cultivated and people had acquired the strength of non-violence, 'we shall be conquered by none. We want non-violence not of the weak but of the strong, the non-violence which proceeds from courage.'

Non-violence as an ideal meant the maximum possible relative non-violence which one is capable of at a given moment. Gandhi believed that violence for (i) sustaining one's body or human life in general, by using disinfectants, pesticides and killing wild animals and for (ii) protecting one's wards or children is justified. Similarly violence for the sake of those whose life is taken is not himsa, just as a surgeon who operates on a patient or puts him to death to relieve him from intense unbearable physical pain does no himsa. The motive and the intent underlying the act is a basic consideration in deciding whether a particular act of killing amounts to violence or not.⁵⁰

Gandhi's non-violence implied his opposition to the fascist and Bolshevik revolutions which were based on force and violence and led

to the unnecessary killing of men. He hoped that non-violence would prevent the emergence of Bolshevism in India. 'In so far as it [Bolshevism] is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.' 'It is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence.' He developed non-violence into a means of individual, group and mass resistance against autocratic authority in a manner and on a scale unthought of by any other philosopher prior to or after him.

The absence of ill will or desire postulated another implication of non-violence and that is *brahmacharya*. In a restricted sense it meant 'control of animal passion' which controlled the exercise of every other passion. Non-violence also implied 'bread labour' which would lead to a minimization of want and would establish the bond of Love through common voluntary labour.

Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, were only new names for the ancient law of suffering. Gandhi cited instances of historical personages like Daniel and Socrates (ideal citizens), Mirabai and Prahlad (courageous individuals) who practised satyagraha and thus showed that the doctrine was very old. It was only an extension of the law of Love and Truth, and was a coin inscribed on two sides alternately with Love and Truth. When an opponent resists, satyagraha becomes irresistible since a satyagrahi fights for Truth. Death in the fight is deliverance and prison is a gateway to liberty. Satyagraha is called soul-force because it is only when a satyagrahi believes in soul force that he can become fearless and can invite self-suffering, as he would then gladly give up the body if that could change the opponents' view of Truth. Victory lay in the ability to die so that the opponent could see the Truth. The satyagrahi would never injure his opponent; he would appeal to the opponent by reason and self-sacrifice. While the necessity of insisting on Truth implied eschewing the use of compulsion by superior force, it also implied non-submission to error, even at the cost of one's life.

Some attempts have been made to discover 'a definite pattern of action in satyagraha', but these have not been convincing. A true satyagrahi is always in one of the three conditions: either in prison or in an analogous state, or engaged in satyagraha, or at the spinning wheel or at some other constructive work for advancing the cause of swaraj.

Since satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to it. An appeal to the constituted authorities and public opinion would be made before he launched satyagraha. Gandhi believed, till the last, that 'every worthy object can be achieved by the use of satyagraha'. 'It is the highest

and infallible means, the greatest force. . . . Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.'

Satyagraha is direct action in a struggle and not passive resistance. The opponent in this struggle is treated with respect; it is not his person but his principles, policies and actions which are subjected to satyagraha. The wrongdoer is never sought to be embarrassed. The satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer whose systems and measures are subjected to an attack; his constant appeal is to the opponent's heart. The opponent is personally not considered an enemy. The appeal of satyagraha is not simply persuasive; in fact it is more extensive and intensive than that of reason. 'Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding. The self suffering of the satyagrahi becomes a moral force which would make the opponent realize the injustice of his actions. It is the price of his ahimsa and the value he attaches to the soul-force for achieving justice. 'Self suffering or self sacrifice is an integral part of satyagraha.'

The ideal of a satyagrahi is to 'strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal. . . . When death comes, he must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets even slow death by torture.' He has to undergo a vigorous discipline for a long time in order to become an impersonal force and a moral power for removing injustice. He has to observe the vows of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *asteya*, *aparigraha* and *brahmacharya*. Unless, he had adhered to the five vows, he could not embark on the experiment at all. He must exercise self-restraint with regard to food and drink and should purify himself by regular fasting, control his thought and should find joy in renunciation and sacrifice. Gandhi often used the terms *tapasya* and *sadhna* in the context of satyagraha. All this voluntary self-suffering is undergone with a view to preserve and promote Truth.

Satyagraha could not be practised by anyone unless he had imbibed the quality of fearlessness. It is in this context that Gandhi often emphasized that violence was a hundred times preferable to cowardice. Violence in a good cause was less immoral than cowardice. The positive moral courage in a satyagrahi enables him to resist and defy the worst form of violence. Satyagraha therefore is a weapon of the brave and the strong and is distinguishable from passive resistance a weapon of the timid and the weak.

Satyagraha is a creative force as an instrument of social control; its creativity is inherent in its basis of ahimsa and moral persuasion. Every act of satyagraha leads to the moral improvement of the satyagrahi himself by the *tapasya* that he performs and of the social milieu by the elimination of injustice. Gandhi considered its creativity to be absolute

and very dynamic which could be applied in diverse ways to different situations. The variety of methods by Gandhi on different occasions were: (i) fasting, (ii) defiance of violence, (ii) self-suffering other than fasting, (iv) non-cooperation and civil disobedience. It would be meaningful to distinguish different satyagrahas on the basis of numbers participating in the event — one individual, a group, or the masses. Satyagraha is as much a weapon of the individual, as of a small group or of the whole nation.

Individual satyagraha is an effort made by an individual to use his moral power for the achievement of Truth in a situation in which he may or may not be personally involved. The effectiveness of satyagraha does not necessarily depend on numbers. When an individual adopts and practises active non-violence, it can produce, Gandhi argued, results far beyond the physical or numerical value of the person practising it. 'Non-violence in its dynamic condition means . . . the pitting of one's soul against the will of the tyrant.' The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. 'Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid.'

Gandhi undertook numerous fasts of which the most significant during the period under review was the '*fast unto death*' launched on 20 September 1932 against the Communal Award. In this case his fast succeeded in persuading Ambedkar to modify his determined stand. With a sympathetic adversary, a satyagraha of this type could help draw attention to the dangers of developing conflict situations and prevent them from attaining a violent climax.

Gandhi's satyagraha in Champaran is a case of individual civil disobedience based on obedience to a moral law which, to the satyagrahi, is of higher importance than the government law. Here the issue was definitely capable of being understood clearly.

The civil disobedience in South Africa in 1913, the strike by Ahmedabad textile mill-workers and the Kheda satyagraha in 1918 are significant instances of group satyagraha.

The Rowlatt Satyagraha, the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-2 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1 are instances of non-violent mass movements. In a mass satyagraha, it was enough if the masses obeyed their leader just like soldiers in an army, and the rules of satyagraha in action as laid down by the leaders were observed. The ideals were not expected to be fulfilled by the masses. Gandhi had once said: 'There will never be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe non-violence.' The 9-point code of conduct for a civil resister was laid down in 1930, on the eve of the mass Civil Disobedience Movement. Since Gandhi had realized after his experience of the Rowlatt Satyagraha that

the Civil Disobedience Movement should be launched only after sufficient preparation, he had framed that code of conduct and was able to use and develop his Sabarmati Ashram as a training centre. The details of the mass movements have been discussed elsewhere in this volume.

7. Gandhi and the Harijan Question

Gandhi's approach to the removal of the sin of untouchability was different from that of all previous reformers and was in keeping with his philosophy of non-violence. Soon after his entry on the Indian political stage he advocated the removal of this blot on the face of India. 'Untouchability is a sin, a great crime and if Hinduism does not destroy this serpent, it will be devoured by it.'⁵¹ He emphasized that Hinduism must perish if it did not purge itself of the sin of untouchability. The vow to work for the removal of untouchability taken by the inmates of the Sabarmati (satyagraha) Ashram indicated his belief that the evil was not part and parcel of Hinduism, and that it was the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat it. With the passage of time, Gandhi's condemnation of the evil became more pronounced and newer terms were used. In 1921, the Hindus were held guilty of practising 'Dyerism and O'Dwyerism' on their kith and kin and were held guilty of inflicting a grosser outrage than that in Punjab.⁵² They had made a fetish of outward observances and had degraded religion by making it simply a question of eating and drinking. He was 'unconvinced' that the 'sin' was part of Hinduism; if it were so, 'I should not think twice before renouncing Hinduism.'⁵³ The curse of untouchability was virtually poisoning Hinduism itself.

Gandhi specified very clearly what he exactly meant by the eradication of untouchability since a host of practices were clubbed together under this evil. It meant the abolition of the concept of pollution by mere touch or physical contact (at some places by mere approach or visibility) of certain persons born in a particular caste or family.⁵⁴ 'This idea of pollution is sinful and not acceptable to reason; it is contrary to Truth and Non-violence and hence is not dharma.' It did not mean abolition of restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage since the same were devices of self-control for the protection of Hindu society and were based on caste distinctions. Caste was considered by Gandhi to be a useful institution which stood in need of purification and proper regulation but untouchability was 'a crime against God and man' and needed to be destroyed. The abolition of untouchability did not imply any danger to *varnashramaaharma* which had nothing to do with the evil; it did not envisage that the untouchables should abandon their hereditary profession and upset the social order.⁵⁵ The movement was a challenge to orthodoxy and therefore he wanted to assure them that 'we mean no

more than we say' even though it involved the risk of his being charged with hypocrisy and inconsistency.

Gandhi took upon himself this task because he considered it his duty to make efforts for the removal of the evil which was *adharma*. 'Do not touch me,' he said, 'is not Hinduism but Dyerism.' The desire for removal of untouchability was with him since his childhood when he was not even partially acquainted with either the Bible or its followers. His advocacy of removal of the evil became more emphatic with the launching of the Non-cooperation Movement when he included it as one of the conditions precedent for winning swaraj. A believer in untouchability as part of Hinduism had no right to become a non-cooperator. He felt that it was impossible to preserve Hinduism by clinging to untouchability as part of *dharma*. So long as the Hindu society did not rid itself of the evil, the path of winning swaraj would remain blocked visibly or invisibly. He believed that the essence of Hinduism was opposed to the practice of untouchability, and he was prepared to wage 'a lone fight, if need be' against this hypocrisy. The Hindus had held the evil to be based on the scriptures and had used the *shastras* as instruments of selfishness. He did not enter upon a shastric discussion because he knew that the art of interpreting the *shastras* was like a lawyer's profession. Discussing them was like 'entering a dark well'. 'Anybody who falls into it will never be able to swim and get out.'⁵⁶ He rejected the *shastras* if they countenanced any such evil. The verses in the *Manusmriti* which sanctioned the evil were declared to be apocryphal and unauthentic. He asserted that the Gita advocated the equality of all men to obtain *moksha*.

Having thus cleared the woods, his method of work was consistent with truth and non-violence. Untouchability was held to be 'an attitude of mind and not a concrete object'. A change of heart was necessary for this reform like the acceptance of non-violence, and the movement for its removal had to be carried on along the same lines as that of acceptance of non-violence.⁵⁷ He put forward a two-fold way to solve the problem of the expiation by caste Hindus and *tapasacharya* by the untouchables. The sin of untouchability had been imposed by the caste Hindus, therefore they must undergo self-suffering for it; they must purify themselves and must pay the debt which they owe to their suppressed brethren. The initiative for its eradication should be taken by the caste Hindus and not by the untouchables; the former owe it as a duty to make a determined effort to purify Hinduism of this excrescence (Satanism) in religion.⁵⁸ This evil practice had even led to the downfall of Hinduism. He tried to awaken Hindu society by harsh words, though with great affection and humility. It was the least penance which the Hindus owed to the untouchables and to the world at large. He opposed

violence in any shape or form even when this evil was eating into the vitals of the Hindu community. The programme of removal of untouchability was 'just some little expiation for a monstrous wrong'. It was essentially by way of self-purification that the removal of untouchability should be undertaken. The work was not to be taken up out of fear or hope of advantage — fear of untouchables going over to another religion or hope of political gains.⁵⁹ The Hindus alone would have to do *prayaschita* for, just as the dirt from one's body, it would go only when he made efforts to remove it.

The root cause of this evil was the feeling of arrogant superiority of caste Hindus towards their own brethren. A fight had to be waged against this hydra-headed monster of superiority.⁶⁰ Gandhi sometimes said that the Just God had meted out a retributive justice to the Hindus by making them 'the pariahs of the empire'.^{60a} 'We have segregated the pariah and we in turn are segregated in the British colonies.' The conduct of the whites towards Indians was exactly like that of the Hindus towards the *Antyajās*. The system of suppression was as devilish as the English system of government. The evil could be removed only by a conscious voluntary effort on the part of Hindus. When they criticized the meat-eating habits of the depressed classes, Gandhi castigated them by saying: 'You strain at the himsaic gnat of meat eating and swallow the trebly himsaic camel of deliberate suppression of millions of fellow beings.'⁶¹

Gandhi had a different thing to say to the untouchables, the *panchams*, the Dheds, the *Antyajās*. The educated among them were advised that they should never permit in their mind the thought that they are not Hindus. They should be like members of a family where one person does not leave his family because of harassment by other members but tries to persuade others to see his point of view. The professions of weaving and agriculture provide clothing and food; scavenging and sanitary work safeguard public health. Gandhi, while addressing meetings of the untouchables, visualized three alternatives open to them.⁶² The first was that they get impatient at the pace of reform and seek the help of the foreign government. They would get it but they would fall from the frying pan into the fire. The second was that they reject Hinduism and accept wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. This alternative also would not lead to worldly betterment. No amount of physical inconvenience could warrant the abandonment of one's own religion. He highlighted that if the inhuman treatment of the untouchables were a part of Hinduism, its rejection would be a paramount duty for all of us. But it was not so. The third alternative was self-help and self-dependence with such assistance as the caste Hindus would render as part of their own duty.⁶³

He was conscious of the fact that it would be futile to attempt to eradicate the evil by violence towards Hindu society. It would be impossible for the untouchables to destroy the crores of caste Hindus and end the evil.⁶⁴ The means of ending this practice lay in their own hands. He repeatedly asserted that the work of handling unclean things was holy and compared it to mothers and doctors who performed similar functions, thereby raising the dignity of their profession. They were advised to respect the rules of Hindu society, to give up dissoluteness, to take to hygienic ways of living, bathing after performing their sanitary duties, refusing to take left-over food and to insist on receiving uncooked food-grains. They were advised to live fearlessly like thorough-going Hindus. Their *tapasacharya* consisted in taking to the profession of weaving, spinning and in ridding themselves of evil habits like drinking, eating beef, and insanitary living. He advised them to become self-reliant and free from economic poverty; they should not ask the Hindus to emancipate them as a favour. They must win their own swaraj.⁶⁵

It was in accordance with his non-violent philosophy and in keeping with his ultimate goal of preserving intact the Hindu society that he advised the untouchables not to 'wrest their rights by violence' as is 'done in the west'.⁶⁶ Similarly, he would not advocate violation of *maryada dharma* and never advocated inter-dining and inter-marriage. The cause of the untouchables was sacred and it could not be achieved by satanic (violent) methods. He discouraged the use of violence by them in any shape or form for eradicating this evil. At a conference of the Antyajas in 1920, he opposed a resolution which aimed at making it open to all untouchables to enter temples.⁶⁷ It was impossible to get the society to accept this since it was not prepared for it yet. Gandhi had to influence the untouchables much more and to counsel patience to some active Antyajas. They were advised not to call in the aid of outsiders since non-Hindu interference would offend the orthodox sections whom they had to convert and conquer through their love.

Gandhi believed that the abolition of the doctrine of inequality which permeated the entire life of the untouchables should be the first step to restore unity in Hindu society. The removal of untouchability was one of the two basic fundamentals of Indian nationalism, the other being Hindu-Muslim unity. The first would restore homogeneity to Hindu society and the second to the Indian nation. He wanted that the untouchables should not be subject to various restrictions concerning approach, access to drinking water, entry into temples, and facilities for education. The temple entry programme was significant because this was a method of penance for the caste Hindus. Even in this case Gandhi wanted entry for the untouchables to all such temples as were open to

non-Brahmins.⁶⁸ A significant satyagraha for securing temple entry and the freedom to walk along the approach road leading to the Vaikom Temple (Kerala) was launched by the untouchables supported by some caste Hindus. Ultimately the Brahmin opposition was won over and they withdrew the restrictions against the untouchables.

By making the removal of untouchability as a condition precedent for swaraj, Gandhi not only revealed his understanding of the British policy of taking advantage of the weakness of the Indian social fabric but also his farsightedness in understanding the social compulsions in Hindu society.^{68a} In 1920, he wrote: 'An empire which has set the Hindus and Muslims against each other will not hesitate to create enmity between the Antyajias and the rest of the Hindus.'⁶⁹ The foreign ruling class would encourage divisions among Indians. The structure of government rested entirely on the weak foundations of 'our' unity, either the Hindu-Muslim question, or Brahmin vs. non-Brahmin, or caste Hindu vs. the untouchable.⁷⁰

He further believed that if the lot of the untouchables was not improved when all the Hindus were suffering under colonial rule, it was not likely to be better under the intoxication of swaraj.⁷¹ His sense of timing was very appropriate. Therefore at a number of places he said that swaraj without the removal of untouchability was worthless. 'If we came into power with the stain of untouchability uneffaced, the untouchables would be far worse off under that swaraj because our failings would then be buttressed by the accession of power.' All distinctions of superiority and inferiority attaching to birth should be removed. Swaraj would be meaningless if one-fifth of the population was to be kept under perpetual subjection.^{71a}

Gandhi's reactions to the Communal Award of 1932, in so far as it affected the untouchables, can be appreciated only when we understand his approach to the problem through non-violence and love with the overall objective of bringing about unity in Hindu society. He would oppose any new device which could retard the process of harmonization between the various sections of the Hindu society. He was aware of the demand for a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes at the Second Round Table Conference. He had declared: 'I am opposed to their [Depressed Classes] special representation. I am convinced that it can do them no good and may do much harm. . . . What these people need more than election to the legislature is protection from social and religious persecution.'⁷² While answering questions in London, he said a 'special electorate . . . would do that community immense harm. It would divide the Hindu community into armed camps and provoke needless opposition.'⁷³ On another occasion he declared that a 'separate

electorate to the untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. . . . Do you want the untouchables to remain untouchables for ever? The separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability.' In a different meeting he said: 'For me who feels with them and knows their life, it is equal to killing them if separate electorates are given them. They are in the hands of superior classes. They are at their mercy. How can I invite utter destruction for them? At the concluding session of the Minorities Committee, Gandhi opposed separate electorates for the untouchables and prophetically declared: 'If I was the only person to resist this thing, I would resist it with my life.'⁷⁴ On his return from England, in an interview to the press, he said that the untouchables 'are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. I would love to die so that they may live, and live with perfect dignity and respect.'⁷⁵

In March 1932, Gandhi wrote to Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, giving proper notice of his intention to resist with his life 'the granting of separate electorates to the untouchables'. Since the significance of his announcement may not have been then appreciated, he said: 'I am not against their representation in the legislatures. . . . I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from a purely political standpoint.' 'For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue . . . separate electorate is neither penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under.'⁷⁶ He, as a civil resister, conveyed his resolve, 'to sacrifice himself even by fasting to a finish'. In his discussions with Sardar Patel and Mahadev Desai, Gandhi said: 'The possible consequences of separate electorate for Harijans fill me with horror . . . [it] will create division among Hindus so much so that it will lead to bloodshed. . . . It is for me a religious and not a political question.'⁷⁷

After the declaration of Communal Award, Gandhi informed Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, on 18 August 1932 of his 'fast unto death' on the issue of granting separate electorates to the Depressed Classes.⁷⁸ MacDonald failed to understand the question from the moral and religious point of view and misinterpreted the 'fast unto death' as an attempt 'to prevent the Depressed Classes . . . from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf.'⁷⁹ Gandhi only adhered to his decision since 'in the establishment of separate electorates . . . for the Depressed Classes' he sensed 'the injection of poison . . . calculated to destroy Hinduism' which would do 'no good whatever to the Depressed Classes'.⁸⁰

Gandhi elaborated the rationale behind his fast. It was only against

the separate electorate and not against reservation of seats. He believed that the untouchables would rise not by reservation of seats but by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers.⁸¹ The separate electorate would have killed any prospect of reform which had been moving for the last ten years in geometrical progression among the Hindus. If the caste Hindus could be awakened from their slumber and roused to a sense of their duty, the fast would have served its purpose. The fast generated furious activity among caste Hindus who got into negotiations with Dr Ambedkar. Ambedkar was keen to get political power for the untouchables and was anxious to build them up into a separate bloc. He wanted Gandhi to abandon working for the 'national welfare' and to devote himself 'entirely to the welfare of the Depressed Classes.'⁸² Gandhi was willing to accept any pact which did not have even a tinge of separate electorate about it.

Ultimately an agreement was signed between the leaders of the caste Hindus and Depressed Classes on 24 September 1932. The British Government accepted the agreement in toto and Gandhi broke his fast on 26 September 1932. The settlement laid down that 148 seats in place of 78 would be reserved for the Depressed Classes. The election to these seats would be by joint electorates. The procedure was that all the Depressed Class voters would form an electoral college and elect a panel of Depressed Class candidates by single vote. The first four persons would be candidates for election by the general electorate. In the central legislature 18 per cent of the seats (allotted to the general electorate for British India) would be reserved for the Depressed Classes. This procedure would come to an end after ten years unless terminated sooner by mutual agreement between the communities. Disabilities for members of Depressed Class in seeking election to local bodies or for appointment to public services were to be deleted. In every province arrangements for educational facilities for the Depressed Classes would be made.⁸³

The most vital part of the settlement related to social and religious reform in the Hindu community. Gandhi often said that if the part to be performed by the caste Hindus was not well played during the coming months, the fast would be taken up again.

When in November 1932, the government permitted Gandhi to carry on public propaganda for the removal of untouchability, he laid great emphasis on the duty of caste Hindus to fulfil the major part of the pact, i.e. to embrace the untouchables. What he wanted was 'their complete merger in the caste Hindus' who should approach the problem in an 'humble, penitent, religious . . . spirit'. The removal of untouchability, he knew, would produce great political consequences but his was not a political movement. It was a movement purely and simply for the purification of Hinduism which could be brought about only through

non-violence — the purest of means.⁸⁴ In due course of time the artificial barrier separating the Depressed Classes from the fold of Hinduism was removed in a non-violent manner.

8. Gandhi's Vision of Third World Societies

Gandhi was a man of the Third World. He spoke for the poor, oppressed and subjugated masses of the Third World under Colonial control. The principles which he enunciated are most clearly relevant to all those people whose collective existence is characterized by inequality, exploitation and rising discontent.⁸⁵ His assertion of reason and conscience as the criteria by which to judge social institutions has a wide, sometimes revolutionary, appeal in the Third World which has been undergoing transformation in more than one way.

Gandhi was conscious of the problem of social transformation though he avoided a general discussion and analysis of causality of social change and social control. He had sufficiently explained the method of Satyagraha and non-violence to resolve conflicts and contradictions which would arise in the process of social transformation. He visualized the shape which the Third World societies should take although this had been conceived specially in the context of India. The constructive programme advocated by him included some general principles which have a much wider applicability than the specific Indian context which he had in view. It included an overall condemnation of the western civilization and industrialized society. As early as 1908 he had written 'Machinery is like a snake hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes'; 'Where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered.'⁸⁶

Gandhi's ideal society is a completely rural society and his scheme of construction of a new social order is applicable to the Third World countries which have not yet fallen a prey to mechanization, industrialization and automation. The constructive programme advocated by him was both 'a general and universal programme of social reconstruction and a concrete scheme of work dictated by situational compulsions.'⁸⁷ The programme aimed at leading the unemployed, famished and poor peasantry to a life of contentment and employment. It was suited to the entire Third World societies having a vast rural sector in which an overwhelming majority was under-employed, poor and under-clothed. The programme aimed at making villages self-sufficient, independent and fairly autonomous and was thus primarily concerned with the problem of village reconstruction in the Third World.

The actual spelling out of this programme of reconstruction of Third World societies began in 1921. It was elaborated only after 1922 when

Gandhi devoted his energies to the development of a programme for the tackling of rural backwardness and unemployment. In 1941 he presented his concrete programme in the form of a booklet, *Constructive Programme : Its meaning and place*, which was revised in 1945. The emphasis of the constructive programme was on individual effort unaided by the government. The growth of small-scale industries and self-governing institutions by the voluntary efforts of the people was the keynote of reconstruction in Third World societies. The programme was ultimately to lead to the establishment of equality since most of the socio-economic evils were connected with the generation and encouragement of inequality in industrialized societies.

Gandhi advocated a long list of activities for this social reconstruction, some of which, though specifically applicable to India, are also relevant to Third World societies in general. The establishment of khadi production centres, development of village industries, introduction of basic education, organization of peasantry and labour were items which have greater relevance to third world societies in general.

The encouragement of khadi production centres rested on the fact that there were millions of semi-employed and unemployed people in all agricultural societies who would get employment and improve their economic condition. The utilization of spare hours and months of idleness would not be possible by any other means. The appeal of the *charkha*, the spinning-wheel, is universal to all agricultural societies where the peasantry has very little to keep it engaged for six months in a year. The *charkha* it was hoped, would become a symbol of shedding idleness and an indicator of the value of mutual co-operation.⁸⁸ Wherever *charkha* work was fairly established all ameliorative activity would go on according to the capacity of the villagers and the workers concerned. Gandhi contended that khadi was not to be treated as an article of commerce but as one necessary for the sustenance of semi-starved millions. He hoped that by reviving khadi and other village industries, it would be possible to 'remodel national life in keeping with the ideal of simplicity and domesticity implanted in the bosom of the masses'. They would then not be dragged into 'the clutches of an imperialism which is built upon exploitation of the weaker races of the earth and the acceptance of a giddy materialistic civilization protected by naval and air forces that have made peaceful living almost impossible'. Imperialism would then have been refined into a commonwealth of nations 'which will combine for the purpose of giving their best to the world and of protecting the weaker nations of the earth'.⁸⁹

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Chapter X

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Socialist Ideology

D.N. Panigrahi

1. Nehru's Concept of Socialism

SOCIALISM IS ESSENTIALLY a revolt against capitalism, against the tyranny of wealth acquired by a few at the expense of many, against the unbridled acquisitive instinct of man determined to profit by exploiting the labour of fellow beings. It sets out to replace the inherited inequalities of a feudal social system by creating a new social order wherein the sources of production are controlled or regulated by the state and the citizens are granted full social, economic and political equality. In such a system, the right to private property is abolished, and all property is vested in the community as a whole. In the ultimate analysis, however, orthodox socialism places the social class and society as a whole above the individual, in contrast to liberal theories of politics. In the theory of communism, state socialism is considered only a transitional stage; a free, classless, stateless, communal life being the eventual ideal. In principle, Jawaharlal Nehru was inclined to accept the validity of scientific socialism as propounded by Marx, but he was repelled by the attempts of socialist states to make the individual totally subservient to the state, denying him the basic freedoms and liberty so essential for the development of his personality and for raising the quality of life.

While Jawaharlal Nehru sought to guide India's social transformation on socialistic lines, he aspired to achieve it through a democratic process. He wanted to usher in a social revolution through the consent of the people. This was by no means an easy task, yet he persevered in his endeavours, and created an infrastructure for initiating such a revolution when he became the first Prime Minister of India after the achievement of freedom. Throughout his public life, whether as a radical nationalist leader of India's freedom struggle, or later as the foremost member of the Government of India, he repeatedly stressed that the new social order to be built in India must be based on the cardinal principles of liberty, equality and social justice. He spoke of socialism in

this context. The socialist ideology, as conjured up in his mind and thought, represented his broad vision of building a classless society as a distant ideal, and epitomized his creative approach to the solution of the problem of India's poverty and the social advancement of the people of India.

Nehru was greatly attracted to and influenced by Marxism. But he was neither a Marxist nor a doctrinaire socialist. His commitment to socialism was an intellectual and moral one. At no stage did he claim to be an ideologue, dogmatically asserting the validity of eternal principles of socialism. Purely at an ideational level, he accepted the validity of the main tenets of Marxism: its analysis of the capitalist mode of production and its role in debasing and enslaving the wage-earners and in breeding inequality and conflict in society; imperialism as a world force leading to exploitation of colonies by creating captive markets, as in the case of India; the concept of class struggle in historical development and the inevitable overthrow of the capitalist society through socialist struggles; and the Marxist interpretation of history as a discovery in dynamic social theory. In his writings and speeches, he showed remarkable conceptual clarity on these issues and provided deep insights and understanding of the processes of history, rarely found among politicians. He was indeed a great intellectual, an avid reader, and his ideas were formed and concepts refined through deep reflection.

In *The Discovery of India*, Nehru provided an excellent Marxian critique of British rule in India, accusing the colonial administration of enslaving Indian economy and society and forging all kinds of exploitative relationships which ruined India economically, culturally and politically. It is true that he was appalled by the poverty of the Indian countryside on the one hand and the lack of industrial development in India on the other under colonial domination, and he sought to transform Indian society, deriving inspiration from socialism; but he was equally appalled by the violent methods often adopted for the establishment of a socialist society, through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Being a staunch democrat, he was opposed to the idea of a total expropriation of property leading to an annihilation of people through violent means.

His world-view was informed by his consciousness, which derived its content as much from the Indian nationalist ethos and humanism as from Marxism; and from his own understanding and perceptions of the evolution of man in society. In spite of being an ardent nationalist, he developed an international outlook and vehemently opposed the growth of Nazism and Fascism in Europe, thus coming closer to those radicals who had looked towards Russia for some kind of leadership in world affairs. But as a leader of the largest democracy in the world, he refused to be drawn into a straitjacket of relationships dominated by

super-powers and evolved his policy of non-alignment in world affairs, steering India clear of rivalries and entrenched antagonisms of these powers.

He assigned a pivotal role to the public sector in the planning processes so that large-scale industrialization could be initiated in India. Through the process of mechanized farming, he wanted to wean away the countryside from its backwardness. He initiated the construction of big dams for generating power and providing irrigation in order to promote sustained economic growth and to step up agricultural production. Scientific institutions for research and a chain of national laboratories were established, and heavy industries were given precedence in economic planning. In all these spheres, no doubt, the state had a major role to play and, to an extent, Nehru was inspired by the Russian model of planning. It must also be stressed that the private sector in India was not competent enough, nor did it command adequate resources to embark on such massive industrial enterprises. Besides, Nehru was convinced that the destiny of India lay in the efficacy of democratic methods; in the involvement of the people, of their own free will, in the tasks of social change and transformation. In advocating institutional mechanisms for the socio-economic transformation of India, he asked the people to accept the principles of socialism but warned them that the kind of socialism he sought to build in India would be different from what had been established either in Russia or China. Indian socialism would be egalitarian in spirit and guarantee freedom to the citizens; it would uplift the weak and the downtrodden and mete out social justice; it would overthrow landlordism and the princely order, without bloodshed, and, at the same time, without denying the people their right to own property. He also adopted the much-maligned concept of a mixed economy, which permitted private enterprise to grow alongside the public sector and to contribute to the national welfare. Jawaharlal Nehru, however, did not intend to promote an unbridled growth of wealth, and through state control of major sources of production, fiscal devices and taxation, he intended to control, and, if possible, to totally eliminate concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. To what extent he succeeded in this mission is a different matter, which is worthy of a close scrutiny and a considerable literature has grown around this theme over the years. Nevertheless, the fact remains that his ideas and approach were governed by his commitment to the formation of an egalitarian society, where nationalism, democracy and social justice would flourish; a new social order, which could be created through laws and through the accepted norms of parliamentary practice.

By deliberately opting for the democratic method in his quest for social transformation, Nehru had charted a path full of constraints. The

democratic process, by its very nature, implied that the path of violence and the use of force had to be abandoned and a consensus evolved on major issues through discussion, debate and persuasion. The nationalist movement itself, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru's own leadership, had followed the path of non-violent struggle for the attainment of independence. Nehru argued that, if such a gigantic task could be achieved through non-violence, it would not be impossible to bring about a social revolution in India without bloodshed and violence. Secondly, the path charted by Nehru implicitly accepted popular participation; the principle of people's involvement in the planned development. This again presupposed that the people of India had to be moved, educated, informed and their consent obtained for such a social transformation. This meant that the pace of progress would be slow. Besides, displaying a rare sense of history, Nehru asked whether India was really prepared for a class struggle. By all accounts, it was clear that class formation in India had hardly reached a crucial stage in social development. In an ambitious experiment, he embarked on the task of creating a socialist society without the rigours of a revolution and through a democratic process.

To understand and evaluate Jawaharlal Nehru's ideas it seems worthwhile to take a close look at his social background and his intellectual development as a young man in India and abroad, and as a leader of the gigantic nationalist movement waged against the British raj in India. Also it will be helpful to examine the series of steps he undertook to build a modern Indian polity, egalitarian and socialist in spirit, democratic in content and progressive in its outlook.

2. The Evolution of Nehru's Social Thought and Ideals

Jawaharlal Nehru was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His aristocratic lineage, wealthy parentage, social background and the highly cultivated and cultural environment of his home left an inevitable imprint in his personality. His ancestors were high-caste Brahmins who hailed from Kashmir and were associated with the Mughal administration in the 18th century, occupying offices of eminence and profit. But the family fortunes had dwindled in the wake of the turbulence created by the great uprising of 1857. His grandfather, Gangadhar, who belonged to the Mughal ruling elite of Delhi, had to leave the city around this time. He moved to Agra, where he died soon after, at the relatively young age of 34. Motilal was born three months after Gangadhar's death, on 6 May 1861. Fortunately for Motilal Nehru, his elder brothers, Bansidhar and Nandlal, were as capable and illustrious as their father. Bansidhar excelled in the judicial service and Nandlal became diwan of

the princely state of Khetri in Rajasthan. It was under Nandlal's care and protection that Motilal grew up.

In popular imagination, Motilal Nehru is regarded as rolling in wealth. Few realize that he was virtually a self-made man. He studied Arabic and Persian till the age of twelve at Khetri. Brilliant as he was, he passed the matriculation examination in the first division from the Government High School, Kanpur, and later studied at Muir Central College at Allahabad. In 1883, he topped the list of candidates who took the vakil's examination and began practising law as a junior of Nandlal, who had moved to Allahabad in 1886. In 1887, Nandlal died, leaving a large joint household in his charge. A lesser mortal would have broken down in the wake of the tragedy, but Motilal was a man of indomitable will and energy and he performed his duties as a patriarch with great devotion and looked after young and old alike, and gave the best education possible to the young, some of whom, including Jawaharlal, were sent to England for higher studies.

Motilal Nehru was as much influenced by the lifestyle of his forefathers, who had shared the values and culture of Mughal India, as by the new world which witnessed the onrush of liberal values under the British raj. Intensely secular in his outlook, he had an abiding faith in the composite Indian culture. At the same time, he was rational, independent in his thinking and agnostic to a degree in his religious beliefs. Like several of his distinguished contemporaries, he appreciated western culture, western values and the western art of government and parliamentary practices. He visited England and other countries of Europe more than once and, as just mentioned, sent his son Jawaharlal to England for higher education.

Motilal built up an enormous legal practice in the Allahabad High Court at the turn of the 19-20th century. He liked the good things of life and lived in a princely style, once he had the means to do so. Anand Bhawan, the palatial house which he built in the first decade of the present century, was to be a symbol of the new world he lived in. Modern and westernized, he cast aside the taboos of caste and religion, food and drink, denouncing outdated Hindu customs and superstitions, and entered into social intercourse with men of eminence, British and Indians alike, marching on the road to modernization. But he was not swept off his moorings, the East and the West blended admirably in Anand Bhawan.

Into such a family, Jawaharlal Nehru was born. Being the only son of his parents, he was adored by them. They showered their love and affection on him, and every conceivable comfort was available to Jawaharlal Nehru as a young child. Before he was sent to school in

England in 1905, at the age of sixteen, he was privately tutored at home. Ferdinand Brooks, an Irish theosophist, recommended by Mrs Annie Besant, was his tutor. Brooks set up a small laboratory at home. It is recorded by Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography* that he spent hours in this laboratory engaged in experiments, full of curiosity and wonder. Another abiding trait he developed during this period was his love for books. He read, as a young boy, mostly English authors — novels, poetry and other classics. In his conversations with Tibor Mende, he recalled that he studied a great deal and developed an introspective bent of mind. Jawaharlal was also influenced tremendously by Indian mythology, Indian philosophy and Indian stories mostly taken from Mahabharata and other epics. He said:

I think India has grown upon me. Being part of India, of course, I had it in me all the time. Not consciously, to begin with. In my childhood, apart from the Indian environment which I absorbed unconsciously, I absorbed India first through my mother and through the other ladies of the family who as you might know, used to be, and may still be, full of Indian stories; stories from Indian mythology. Even those among them you may consider not educated or well read, even those were cultured in the sense of knowing the stories of our epics, with every single phase and incident in them. These were repeated as stories to the children and they became gradually imbibed into their consciousness. There was that. And also, of course, I grew up in North India, where there is a mixture of what is sometimes called Moslem culture in language, in ways of living, in food, etc. So, I became used to this composite kind of cultural life. 'Cultural' is a big word; but a kind of life one led, one in which certain Western ways and methods have also come in.¹

Again Jawaharlal recalled:

My father was a rebel against many social customs. That, of course, had some influence on me in my early days. By modern standards, my father would be called a conservative in many ways. But in those days, he was a great rebel. And a man of very strong character. That influenced me greatly and so I grew up in this rather composite environment with the steadily increasing influence of the West, or rather of the English West, through the reading of books, of stories and of magazines. With that I went to England.²

There is no doubt that the seven years which Jawaharlal spent in England studying at Harrow, Cambridge and London were crucial in the development and shaping of his personality and ideas. He has been often portrayed by his well-meaning friends as well as critics as essentially a product of the West; as one more westernized and who appreciated and imbibed western values more than most of his contemporaries

in India. This assessment is only partially accurate. Jawaharlal Nehru's love for India and pride in being an Indian was most pronounced, and these sentiments found eloquent articulation in his writings and speeches throughout his life, both during the period of nationalist struggle, and later as the Prime Minister of India. In fact, his faith and commitment to the greatness of Indian culture, India's past and its spiritual values, from which his nationalistic fervour sprang, manifested itself in whatever he said or did later. He wrote with great passion about India's heritage and achievements in the realm of culture, philosophy and ideas, which cannot be regarded as just a magnificent obsession. It had become an innate part of his nature and personality. In *The Discovery of India*, he reverts to this question over and over again, and deriving his inspiration and strength from what he called the vitality and spirit of India, he exhorted the Indian people to imbibe these traits and grade them to action. It would be relevant to quote him to stress this point. He asked:

What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir? To all that humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to the cries of triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. To all this and more, in common with all men. But there is a special heritage for those of us of India, not an exclusive one, for none are exclusive and all are common to the race of man, but more especially applicable to us, something that is in our flesh and blood and bones, that has gone to make us what we are and what we are likely to be.³

This emotional response to India led Nehru to explore India's past in his book, *The Discovery of India*, which he wrote in Ahmednagar Fort, while serving a prison term between 1942 and 1945.

Two of the most outstanding schools in England are Harrow and Eton, where the children of the British aristocracy are educated. Jawaharlal was sent to Harrow. His letters to his father from Harrow reveal his intense nature, critical acumen, sharp intellect and an ability to grasp the essentials which he expressed with sophistication, coherence and refinement. Even when he was away in England, he evinced a keen interest in the activities of the Indian National Congress and the political happenings in India about which Motilal wrote at length in his letters to him. The correspondence between the father and the son make fascinating reading.

After Harrow, Jawaharlal joined Trinity College, Cambridge, to study the Natural Science Tripos, taking chemistry, geology and botany as his subjects, which he passed with Honours. Later, he was called to the Bar

at the Inner Temple. At the beginning, Motilal Nehru toyed with the idea of asking Nehru to compete for the ICS examination. But he soon gave it up. Jawaharlal was least interested in it. During this period Jawaharlal came in contact with men of ideas of his times and he imbibed the basic elements of the concept of socialism, of social and economic justice and equality, which were later refined through deep study and reflection. Jawaharlal did not accept any ideas as sacrosanct. He pointed out that the training which he had received in science made him sceptical of anything which did not pass the test of reason. Besides, science had taught him the fundamental principle that no idea could be regarded as permanently valid. He had read Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Bentham, John Stuart Mill and others, whom he quoted in his writings. He also read George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell and J.M. Keynes, all of whom he knew personally. But none of them, he felt, had a 'very marked influence' on him. He recalled the sources of his inspiration thus:

In England, in my early days, I was much influenced by things like the story of the Italian Republic, by Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi; by the Irish struggle; that was nearby. In fact, I paid a visit to Ireland at the beginning of Sinn Fein. I was much interested in it.⁴

He went on to relate to Tibor Mende:

I was simply interested in Ireland. I read a book or two. Then I have always been interested in the French Revolution. I read some books on that, too, and it excited me. This kind of vague, well, . . . nationalism . . . freedom movements, . . . aiming at some kind of equality, . . . these broad things, . . . a kind of utopian socialism not scientific at all really. So far as the Russian revolution was concerned, I was in India then. And I got entangled in the Indian nationalist movement after my return. In fact, Mr Gandhi had also come into the picture and he was a tremendous conditioning factor.⁵

He observed that he sympathized with the Russian revolution and the revolutionary movement, but recalled:

There was no Marxism attached to it in any way. So, the Kerensky Revolution created a great deal of interest not only in me but in India in general. Then followed the Bolshevik Revolution, which was a very exciting episode indeed. We did not get much information about it at that time, it was just after the war and that, of course, was a very absorbing factor. Our sympathies were very much with Lenin and the others, without knowing much about Marxism. I had not read about Marxism by then.⁶

A close examination of the social background and the early life of Jawaharlal Nehru enables us to discover significant clues to his ideas; to

the depth of his perceptions and his creative sensitivity in reacting to the essential problems of socio-economic transformation of India, which agitated his mind all through his distinguished public career. It is clear from the above account that his ideas were in the process of formation and had not yet crystallized by the time he returned to India. Having come into contact with the Fabians and having sampled their literature as well as being familiar with the writings of the British 'philosophical radicals' and European thinkers, he had developed radical views and sympathies but always remaining within the ambit of the democratic system as prevalent in 'the English west'. Nehru also showed a sensitive awareness of history and the forces which shaped world events, but, as he himself pointed out, he had not studied Marxism till 1920 or so.

The dominant urge which moved Nehru to political action around this time stemmed from his deep concern for the independence of India and the struggle launched under the aegis of the Indian National Congress. Nehru has also recorded that he was not excited at all by the 'moderate' brand of Indian politics. Constitutionalism, he averred, 'offered no hope of success' and terrorism 'I could not accept'.⁷ When Mahatma Gandhi stormed the political stage in 1920 with his programme of a non-violent, non-cooperation movement involving the masses, Jawaharlal Nehru's interest was instantaneous. The new form of political action stirred him deeply and he was deeply impressed by Mahatma Gandhi's strong personality. He plunged into the movement, heart and soul. Here was a form of political action with a difference. Nothing like it had ever before happened in the history of mankind. The mass movement generated by this kind of politics, open and nonchalant as it was, was based on the lofty principles of morality, truth and non-violence. Jawaharlal Nehru was elated and observed: 'The essence of our freedom struggle lies in the mass organization and mass action.' To organize the masses he undertook hurricane tours of the country, going into the rural backwaters, moving from 'village to village' feeding with the peasants, living with them in their mud huts, talking to them for long hours, and often addressing meetings, big and small'. His personal contact with the 'suffering mass' of peasantry in the talukdari regions of Oudh and other areas moved him deeply. The peasant was exploited by everyone, he observed — by the government, landlords, moneylenders, petty officials, police, lawyers and priests.⁸ During his visits, he assured the peasants that Congress was conscious of the need for initiating a 'social revolution' by an overthrow of feudalism after the 'conquest of power' from the British Government. However, in the immediate future, the Congress would examine their grievances and steadfastly work for their emancipation from feudal burdens and illegal exactions and secure for them their rights over land.⁹

Another seminal influence that shaped Nehru's thought, and the essence of which remained unconsciously imbedded in his psyche, has been either overlooked or not given adequate attention by scholars. Jawaharlal Nehru was by no means a religious man in the conventional sense of the term. He himself had said so and written at length in *The Discovery of India* on why religion did not attract him:

Religion as I saw it practised and accepted even by thinking minds, whether it was Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity, did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs, and behind it lay a method of approach to life's problems which was certainly not that of science. There was an element of magic about it, an uncritical credulousness, a reliance on the supernatural. . . .

In the wider sense of the word religion dealt with uncharted regions of human experience, uncharted, that is, by the scientific positive knowledge of the day. . . .¹⁰

Yet Nehru also wrote:

Intellectually I can appreciate to some extent the conception of monism, and I have been attracted towards the *Advaita* (non-dualist) philosophy of the *Vedanta*, though I do not presume to understand it in all its depth and intricacy, and I realize that merely an intellectual appreciation of such matters does not carry one far. . . . The diversity and fullness of nature stir me and produce a harmony of the spirit, and I can imagine myself feeling at home in the old Indian or Greek pagan or pantheistic atmosphere, but minus the conception of God or Gods that was attached to it.¹¹

Nevertheless, it was his conviction that ethics and morality were very important in a man's life. He said: 'Some kind of ethical approach to life has a strong appeal for me, though it would be difficult for me to justify it logically. I have been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on right means and I think one of his greatest contributions to our public life has been this emphasis.' Politics divorced from ethics could be self-defeating.

These reflections were recorded by Nehru as a mature intellectual, while writing his book, *The Discovery of India*; but even in his childhood he gave high priority to ethical and spiritual values. Let us take a look at his *Autobiography*, in which he observed:¹²

Apart from my studies, F.T. Brooks brought a new influence to bear upon me which affected me powerfully for a while. This was Theosophy. He used to have weekly meetings of theosophists in his rooms and I attended them and gradually imbibed theosophical phraseology and ideas. There were metaphysical arguments, and discussions about reincarnation and the astral and other super-natural bodies, and auras, and the doctrine of *Karma*,

and references not only to big books by Madame Blavatsky and other Theosophists but to the Hindu scriptures, the Buddhist 'Dhammapada', Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana, and various philosophers and mystics. I did not understand much that was said but it all sounded very mysterious and fascinating and I felt that here was the key to the secrets of the universe. . . . The Hindu religion especially went up in my estimation not the ritual or ceremonial part, but its great books, the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. . .

Mrs Annie Besant visited Allahabad in those days and delivered several addresses on theosophical subjects. I was deeply moved by her oratory and returned from her speeches dazed and as in a dream. I decided to join the Theosophical Society, although I was only thirteen then. When I went to ask father's permission he laughingly gave it; he did not seem to attach importance to the subject either way. I was a little hurt by his lack of feeling. Great as he was in many ways in my eyes, I felt that he was lacking in spirituality. . . .

So I became a member of the Theosophical Society at thirteen and Mrs Besant herself performed the ceremony of initiation, which consisted of good advice and instruction in some mysterious signs, probably a relic of freemasonry. I was thrilled. I attended the Theosophical Convention at Benares and saw old Colonel Olcott with his fine beard.

In his conversations with Tibor Mende in 1956, Nehru spelt out how Gandhiji's influence filtered down to him in day-to-day life itself. He recalled:

The effect of Gandhiji on me in the early days was to simplify my life very much. I gave up smoking, for instance. . . . I even gave up eating meat. That had nothing to do with philosophy. It just simplified my existence and a slight touch of austerity also came in with it. This kind of influence Gandhi had on vast numbers of people. It changed the whole manner of our living. Again, I had read the *Gita* occasionally and admired it. *I read it again and again*. Not for a philosophical or from a theosophical point of view, but it had numerous parts which had a powerful effect on me. The sort of thing that if a person does the right thing the right results will flow from it. (Emphasis added.)¹³

It is important to remember that Jawaharlal Nehru was highly spiritual without being religious, and was determined to construct his life on the foundation of ethical values imbibed from various sources. It is against this background that his ideas on Marxism and socialist ideology ought to be tested. Besides, he responded to the concept of socialism through nationalism, and sought to adapt socialism to suit Indian conditions and the Indian genius.

3. Nehru and Doctrinaire Socialism

In February 1927, after obtaining the permission of the Indian National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru attended the meeting of the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held at Brussels. Soon after, the League against Imperialism was formed and he was elected to the presidium and became a member of the nine-man Executive Council appointed by it. Among other members of the Executive Council were George Lansbury, Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland and Madame Sun Yat-Sen. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya was secretary of the League. At the Congress, several European radicals, political exiles, revolutionaries and eminent persons having sympathies for Marxism and leftist ideologies, had assembled and the League turned out to be an excellent forum for the political activists from the colonial world, notably from the Asian and African continents, where they would freely express themselves against colonial domination, gaining in the process the sympathy of European peoples for their struggles.¹⁴

The League thus provided a great opportunity to Nehru. He came into contact with radical nationalists from Asia and Africa, with whom he maintained contact in the later period as well. The conference enabled him to familiarize himself with orthodox Marxism and happenings in Europe and Russia. It no doubt broadened his horizons and views; and Nehru devoted himself with great diligence to a study of the writings of Marx, in jail and outside, whenever he found time to do so. This helped him to sharpen his perceptions of historical processes and refine his ideas on social transformation. In his speeches and writings, one finds a reflection of the salient features of the new philosophy. Also, he sought to introduce a radical economic programme as one of the objectives of Indian National Congress, of which he was elected President as many as four times before India became independent.

At the Brussels Congress, Nehru played a significant role. He drafted and moved the resolution on India, making a frontal attack on the inadequacies and evils of British rule in India. British imperialism, he pointed out, led to an unbridled exploitation of the Indian people. The resolution declared: 'the Indian national movement will base its programme on the full emancipation of the peasants and workers of India, without which there can be no real freedom.'¹⁵

In November 1927 Nehru paid a visit to Russia along with his father, wife and sister, Krishna. The visit lasted only for four days but he was impressed by what he saw and wrote a series of articles, which were published in 1928 under the title, *Soviet Russia*. Although his observations and reflections were impressionistic, he rightly observed that Russia was moving forward and would eventually emerge as a great

power. Also, Russian efforts to establish what he called 'a good society' received favourable comments from him, in spite of certain reservations expressed in the articles.

Nehru regarded the Brussels Congress and the formation of the League against Imperialism as an event of first-rate importance, which was 'likely to produce far-reaching results'.¹⁶ He also saw it as a good link with radical opinion in the west and to reach out to the European hemisphere. He appealed to the Indian National Congress to maintain contact with it. But soon differences with the League cropped up on major issues. Also the League began instructing Nehru as to the stand he should take on them, which irked him greatly. In 1928, the Indian National Congress, under the influence of Gandhi had accepted dominion status as its objective. Instantly, a sharp rejoinder came from Virendranath Chattopadhyaya chastizing Nehru and the Indian National Congress for not fighting for full independence for India, and saying that Nehru had compromised and made 'concessions' to the arch enemy, British imperialism. He asked Nehru to withdraw his support to dominion status. Jawaharlal Nehru was disturbed by this kind of interference and he said so in polite but in no uncertain words. The fact of the matter was that Gandhi had felt that the call for full independence should be made after a rejection by the British of the demand for dominion status. Gandhiji had also pointed out that a call for full independence ought to be supported by a civil disobedience movement, for which India was not prepared in 1928. And, in fact, the very next year, in 1929, the Indian National Congress, at a midnight session held on the bank of the Ravi in Lahore, under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, passed the historic resolution for complete independence. On 26 January 1930, a pledge for full independence was taken by the Congress and the people of India, and Gandhiji launched the massive Civil Disobedience Movement, through salt satyagraha and the Dandi March soon after.

Earlier, in December 1927, Nehru had founded the Republican Party of Congress and, in August 1928, the Independence for India League, to enlist the support of the masses for a socialist programme and full independence, had been formed. The Youth League was another forum where Jawaharlal Nehru was very active. These were kinds of pressure groups inside the Congress. But none of these steps taken by the Congress drew the attention of the League against Imperialism and the Communist Party of India. The CPI did not take part in the mass movement launched in 1920-31. Strangely enough, Sapurji Saklatwala, a member of the British Communist Party and the only Indian member of the House of Commons, declared that the workers of Lancashire would be adversely affected by the movement.

Soon after, radical elements, including the CPI, M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan criticized Gandhiji in the choicest of epithets, so typical of Marxist polemics. The 'old man', that is, Gandhi, was an arch reactionary, a petty-bourgeois reactionary, a stooge of capitalism, was an anachronism, an obscurantist, etc.¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, in spite of his difference with Gandhiji on several seminal issues, refused to side with his detractors and critics. The League against Imperialism expelled Jawaharlal Nehru from its membership. This was indeed a strange commentary on the functioning of the league. Jawaharlal Nehru refused to take orders from outside and declared his full support to Mahatma Gandhi. It is indeed ironic that later, M.N. Roy, the only Indian radical thinker who had the temerity and intellectual integrity and conviction to oppose what is known as Lenin's thesis, was expelled from the CPI. Later, even Viren Chattopadhyaya was removed from membership of the league.

Jawaharlal Nehru mentioned in his *Autobiography* how unhappy he had felt about intemperate criticism of Gandhiji. He felt that the main motive was to undermine Gandhi's position in the Congress and the country. He observed:

These parlour Socialists are especially hard on Gandhiji as the arch-reactionary, and advance arguments which in logic, leave little to be desired. But the little fact remains that this 'reactionary' knows India, understands India, almost *is* peasant India, and has shaken up India as no so-called revolutionary has done. Even his latest Harijan activities have gently but irresistibly undermined orthodox Hinduism and shaken it to its foundations. The whole tribe of the Orthodox have ranged themselves against him, and consider him their most dangerous enemy, although he continues to treat them with all gentleness and courtesy. In his own peculiar way he has a knack of releasing powerful forces which spread out, like ripples on the water's surface, and affect millions. Reactionary or revolutionary, he has changed the face of India, given pride and character to a cringing and demoralised people, built up strength and consciousness in the masses, and made the Indian problem a world problem. Quite apart from the objectives aimed at and its metaphysical implications, the method of non-violent non-cooperation or civil resistance is a unique and powerful contribution of his to India and the world, and there can be no doubt that it has been peculiarly suited to Indian conditions.¹⁸

Jawaharlal Nehru felt that these radicals, wanted 'to make high socialistic doctrine a refuge for inaction'. 'It was a little irritating', he said, 'to find people, who did little themselves, criticize others who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray, as reactionaries.'¹⁹ The fact of the matter was that the CPI line of thought and action was quite different; it aimed at organizing 'armed insurrections' in spite of the fact that they had failed to do so. Some heroic

sporadic violent action in the form of armed robberies, armoury raids, bomb outrages and political assassinations had been carried out, which did capture the imagination of the people but it had hardly succeeded in dislodging the seat of British power in India.

Still Jawaharlal Nehru was prepared to be educated and informed by the left ideology and radical elements in India. As a result of the leftist influence on his thought he had accepted that India's independence must be closely linked with social revolution as embodied in the concept of socialism itself. He attacked capitalism and imperialism and observed that the struggle against British rule must be waged both on the political and economic fronts. In the fundamental rights resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru and passed at the Karachi Congress in 1931 under the presidentship of Sardar Patel, these ideas were incorporated in clear terms. The resolution stated: 'In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions.' Further, it had also laid down that workers must have a living wage and various other amenities and that special taxes would be charged on property; that 'the State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport'.²⁰ The essence of socialism indeed found articulation in the Karachi Resolution and it has been hailed as a landmark in the history of India. In this context, Jawaharlal Nehru also pointed out that 'personally he felt' that 'the institution of private property (except in a very restricted sense) gives dangerous power to individuals over society as a whole, and is therefore harmful to the society. I consider it immoral. . . .'²¹ In all this, the influence of socialism was quite apparent and, no doubt, they were a product of Nehru's studies of Marxism and his responses to radicalism in India and abroad.

Being an intellectual, Nehru examined the writings of Marx to attain certain conceptual clarity, and paid eloquent tribute to his genius and concepts. He observed:

A study of Marx and Lenin produced a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light. The long chain of history and of social development appeared to have some meaning, some sequence, and the future lost some of its obscurity. The practical achievements of the Soviet Union were also impressive.²²

He welcomed the Russian revolution as having laid the foundation for a 'new civilization,' towards which the world would advance. But what he could not appreciate about Russia was the lack of 'personal freedom' and 'over regimentation' prevalent in Russian society.²³ He also pointed out in a veiled fashion that there was too much of a personality cult in

Russia and that to further that cult considerable hardships were imposed on individuals and the society. He said: 'often I disliked or did not understand some development there and it seems to me to be too closely concerned with the opportunism of the moment or the power politics of the day.'²⁴ It is interesting to recall the analysis made of Marxism by Jawaharlal Nehru:

Much in the Marxist philosophical outlook I could accept without difficulty: its monism and non-duality of mind and matter, the dynamics of matter and the dialectic of continuous change by evolution as well as leap, through action and interaction, cause and effect, thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It did not satisfy me completely nor did it answer all the questions in my mind, and, almost unawares, a vague idealist approach would creep into my mind, something rather akin to the *Vedanta* approach. It was not a difference between mind and matter but rather of something that lay beyond the mind. Also there was the background of ethics. . . .²⁵

He however, felt that the main contribution of Marx was in the realm of building a new social order in a society, on the basis of social and economic equality. He therefore observed with utter sincerity:

And so while I accepted the fundamentals of the socialist theory, I did not trouble myself about its numerous inner controversies. I had little patience with the leftist groups in India, spending much of their energy in mutual conflict and recrimination over fine points of doctrine which did not interest me at all. Life is too complicated and, as far as we can understand in our present state of knowledge, too illogical for it to be confined within the four corners of a fixed doctrine.²⁶

4. Holding Right and Left Together

By 1930-1, Jawaharlal Nehru had emerged as a foremost leader of the Indian nationalist movement, a militant political activist and an intellectual with a radical image. In 1928, he had presided over five provincial political conferences where he had eloquently spoken in favour of radicalism for the political and social transformation of India. He was also elected president of the All India Trade Union Congress the same year and addressed several conferences of nationalist youth held under the auspices of the recently formed Youth League. The Indian people adored him; the youth idolized him and looked to him for inspiration, guidance and action. Even the socialists, who formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934, sought his support and expected him to lead a radical movement. The Communists rallied around him, specially after the CPI had been banned by the British Government. In spite of such tremendous popularity, however, Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership of the party was not undisputed. He had to carry the Indian National

Congress with him if his intellectual projections and programmes were to be implemented. Mahatma Gandhi realized Nehru's dilemma and advised him to go slow, exercising caution.

In the 1930s, the Indian National Congress had no doubt emerged as a national party and a most powerful organization with a mass base; but it was a party comprising different classes, communities and interests. Such a party had inherent weaknesses. On important issues of social import, it showed strains since it was subjected to contradictory pulls. The landed classes, the business community and the entrepreneurial class, the upper class professionals, the middle class intelligentsia, as well as the lower middle classes, workers, peasants, all had their spokesmen in the Congress. Powerful groups with rightist leanings, radical elements with left-wing sympathies and pure nationalists, without any definite ideology, found a place of honour in the Congress. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi alone was able to keep such diverse elements together. That was why Gandhiji laid stress on fighting for Indian independence first, maintaining an anti-imperialist stance, and assiduously avoiding issues which threatened to bring the social cleavages inherent in Indian society to the surface.

Inside the Congress, the organizational control was exercised by those who could be regarded as rightists. Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Bidhan Chandra Roy and many others from different provinces were important personalities who could not easily be browbeaten or reduced to a secondary position under the spell of radical leadership. Several examples of their resistance to leftist policies come to mind. By 1934 or so, the Congress Socialist Party as well as radicals like Subhas Chandra Bose appealed to Jawaharlal Nehru to take the lead against the rightist elements, the 'reactionaries' in the Congress. In 1936, when Jawaharlal Nehru was elected president of the Congress for a second time, and he spoke the language of revolution and socialism, the rightists were alarmed. Nehru also nominated to his Working Committee some of the acknowledged leaders of the CSP such as Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, to the great mortification of Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad. In his presidential address, Nehru also pleaded for giving representation to the workers and peasants in the AICC and the Working Committee. The polarization between the right and the left inside the Congress became so sharp that Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari tendered their resignation from the Working Committee and in turn Nehru himself threatened to resign from the presidentship of the Congress. It was only Gandhiji's intervention which saved the Congress from a split. Jawaharlal Nehru realized that it was not easy to 'capture' the Congress as suggested by the radicals. He did not intend doing so

and he refused to side with the radicals in the conflict.²⁷ He agreed with Gandhiji that the need of the hour was national unity and that nothing should be done to weaken the Congress. He was wise enough not to precipitate a crisis in the Congress on the issue of socialism.

Similarly, in 1937, differences among the socialists, radicals and ardent anti-imperialists on the one hand and the rightists on the other cropped up again. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and the left wing leaders were against the Congress forming ministries after victory at the elections held under the Government of India Act of 1935. The old guards were in favour of accepting office.

Such conflicts implicitly highlighted the weakness of the Congress and the position of Jawaharlal Nehru in the organization itself. This is not to say that Jawaharlal Nehru had no base in the Congress or that the rightists could take liberties with him. No doubt, the old guards knew well that Nehru's position was unassailable; he could speak from commanding heights owing to his high intellectual calibre and commitment and as an idol of the masses. Moreover, he was indispensable to the party, particularly when elections were in the offing. It was mainly because of Jawaharlal Nehru's mass appeal and his hurricane tours and addresses that the Congress swept the polls. He had travelled more than thirty thousand miles by all kinds of modes of transport during the elections, drawing mammoth gatherings, which no one else could have done, and a Congress majority was returned in eight out of eleven Indian provinces. Yet, Jawaharlal Nehru did not control the party apparatus and had to argue and persuade the other leaders to acquire organizational support for his programme.

Nehru was faced with this dilemma on several occasions during the post-Independence period also. Sardar Patel, as Deputy Prime Minister, had challenged the Prime Minister and had threatened to resign on many issues, not the least being whether the Prime Minister was merely 'the first among equals' or the captain of the ship whose authority could not be challenged. A whole range of questions relating to the concept of cabinet responsibility, the position and powers of the prime minister, had been raised. Sardar Patel's death in 1950 weakened the rightist elements in the Congress organization. But before his death Patel had amply shown his strength when, much against Nehru's wishes, Purushottamdas Tandon was elected Congress President and Rajendra Prasad was elected as President of India. It is true that Tandon and Rajendra Prasad were staunch nationalists and anti-imperialists, yet on important social issues and radical programmes they not only had disagreed with but had opposed Jawaharlal Nehru, and his views were not accepted by the Congress high command. Tandon went to the extent of advising the Prime Minister that he should obtain prior approval from

the Congress president and the high command before formulating government policy on important issues. Nehru rightly refused to abide by such directives and resigned from Tandon's Working Committee, which ultimately led to Tandon's resignation as president of the Congress. Nehru became president of the Congress in 1951 and held the position till 1954. Nehru thus asserted his position as supreme head of the government and the party, basing himself on the mandate he had received from the people at large. In the first decade of Congress rule in the provinces, most of the states were led by rightist elements.

In this situation, in 1952-3, Jawaharlal Nehru sought the support of the socialists, who were then still members of the Indian National Congress, to strengthen his hand in the government. He invited Jayaprakash Narayan to join the central government as Deputy Prime Minister. Had this move been successful, the rightist group in the Congress would have lost their pre-eminent position and the history of the progressive movement would have run a different course. Unfortunately, the socialists and Jayaprakash Narayan put forward impossible conditions and the whole question was shelved for ever. An acceptance of the 'fourteen points' presented as pre-condition by the Socialists would have involved scrapping the entire constitution and redesigning the Indian National Congress as a political party according to the wishes of the socialist group. This would have led to a split in the Congress at all levels, thus destroying the institutional mechanisms available to the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru for building up a new social order. Such a split would have been a tragedy in the Indian situation. The socialists overestimated their strength and moved out of the Congress, forming several splinter socialist groups and parties like the Praja Socialist Party and the Socialist Party.

It is well known that the Hindu Code Bill introduced in the Provisional Parliament had to be withdrawn owing to the opposition of Rajendra Prasad and other rightist groups inside the Congress. It was only after a great deal of recriminating debate and a tussle that Nehru's government was able to pass the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955 and the Hindu Succession Act in 1956. Rajendra Prasad, as the President of India, had been least amenable to the passage of these bills and had given presidential assent to them with considerable hesitation.

The discussion above leads us to conclude that, although Jawaharlal Nehru was a dominant figure in the Congress, he did not control the party machine, and was not in a position to successfully launch his programmes without the assistance and co-operation of other elements in the Congress. More important than that, he was deeply wedded to the democratic system and was determined to function through his party, the cabinet and parliament. He thus subjected himself to checks

and balances and it was not possible for him to impose his will or push his radical programmes with ruthlessness, defying his own party or riding roughshod over the opposition. He endeavoured to educate the people and create a suitable climate of public opinion for his programmes and policies and hoped that a national consensus on vital issues would emerge, laying an enduring foundation for social revolution. He was conscious of his position and he made it clear in his conversation with Tibor Mende:

You see . . . there are concentric circles of action; there are the masses of India; vast masses. . . . I have a sense of communion with them. But then there are large committees. . . . There is, say, the Congress, where thousands attend; then a committee of five hundred; then this Cabinet of fifteen — so, all these concentric circles try to co-operate with each other, yet all pulling in different directions.

I may be very popular. It is true. But I cannot function as an individual. I have to function through colleagues, through others; I have to carry them with me, or to be carried by them. You see . . . there are so many forces conditioning and limiting one's activity.²⁸

5. Nehru's Agrarian and Industrial Policies

Jawaharlal Nehru gave shape to his concept of social transformation, keeping in view the complexities of the Indian situation. Often he has been called a great idealist and a romantic, implying thereby that he did not take account of hard realities while planning for development. On the contrary, it could reasonably be argued that his creativity lay in blending idealism with realism and pragmatism. His sensitive awareness of history, and the forces which moulded it, in fact made him deeply conscious of the social reality obtaining in the country. He rightly observed that Marxian socialism was the product of the industrial revolution in Europe, and that, in the Indian situation, largely characterized by a pre-industrial and a backward rural economy, the kind of questions which were raised in Europe did not apply.²⁹ Not only that, in contrast to the ideas of the left radicals he endeavoured to transform India, recognizing the fact that India was an old yet vibrant civilization, with a long and hoary past, embodying sets of myths, legends, and values derived from powerful currents of philosophical thought, ideas and ethical systems, which were deeply embedded in Indian consciousness. An Indian ethos and an Indian world-view had emerged, based on the perceptions of the commonly shared experiences of ages. While building a new social order within a modern Indian polity, this fact could not be ignored. Besides, the European labour leaders were not faced with the problem of regenerating the rural economy which was so urgently required in India, nor were they confronted with the problems

of nationalism and nation-formation. Even after the emergence of India as an independent polity, the crucial issue was one of nation-formation. The Indian problem became even more complex because of the grinding poverty of the rural countryside. Besides, the communal holocaust in 1947, resulting in the unprecedented movement of populations on both sides of the new borders soon after India became independent, had led to dislocation and destruction of many urban economies, and an enduring foundation for industrial development had to be laid. The most crucial need was increased productivity before equitable distribution could be effected.

In the earlier chapter, the Indian National Congress and the Agrarian Question, the present writer has undertaken an in-depth study of the conceptual framework of Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts to transform Indian agriculture and refashion rural class relations. Jawaharlal Nehru's vision was informed by socialism, but he had strong views on the morality of the methodology to attain it, as also on the crucial issue of ensuring to the individual his dignity and freedom to hold property. The central plank of socialism, viz., that the feudal classes — large zamindars, talukdars and landed interests — were outdated and incongruous in a democracy, and violated the very essence of social and economic equality, was accepted by him. In opposition even to Gandhiji, as well as to other great leaders of the Congress, he had proclaimed that zamindari would be abolished in independent India. It is significant that, soon after Indian independence, he took up the issue of rural transformation and land reforms with the state governments, land reforms being a state subject. Taking advantage of Congress victories in the provinces, he saw to it that initiatives in this sphere were taken and the largest ever body of legislation pertaining to land tenure was passed during the first decade of Indian independence throughout the country. The essential features of the land reforms were the following:

1. All zamindaris and landed interests were abolished, after giving a fair compensation to the landowners.
2. The hereditary ryots or tenants and the occupancy tenants were granted ownership rights over the land under their possession. A fair compensation was to be given to the landlords.
3. A ceiling was placed on land holdings, keeping in view the needs and maintenance of a household consisting of five members and the quality of the soil in terms of productivity, and whether it was dry land or watered through irrigational schemes.
4. The surplus land so gathered would be distributed amongst the tenants-at-will and the agrarian labour in the villages concerned.

It must be pointed out that all of the states, including UP, where landlordism flourished, abolished the zamindari system. Also, the tenants were confirmed on the land tilled as its owners. Compensation was paid to the zamindars, the quantum of compensation having been decided by the government. When in Bihar and UP the zamindars took resort to legal action, Jawaharlal Nehru quietly amended the constitution suitably to the detriment of the landed interests. In practice, however, many of the large estates distributed pieces of land amongst their own kith and kin, thus maintaining family and caste dominance, leaving very little surplus land for distribution among the agrarian poor. Whatever land was available for distribution, it was later discovered, was unsuitable for cultivation.

In most of the ryotwari areas, notably in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Western UP, and Punjab, land ceiling laws were also implemented and ownership rights over lands were confirmed. As a result of the land legislation, new hopes were kindled in the hearts of millions of households, encouraging initiative, drive and enterprise among the peasant classes. The land laws were backed by a vigorous programme of rural uplift, including provision of credit facilities, better and high-yielding varieties of seeds, and providing better tools. As a result, a new class of peasant-proprietors emerged in the countryside. This transformation was brought about mainly by extensive utilization of inputs such as water from irrigation canals, use of power-operated pumps, and greater reliance on chemical fertilizers, hitherto virtually unknown to rural India. A multi-dimensional approach for regenerating rural economy was followed. The villages swiftly imbibed new techniques of agricultural management and production, belying the myth of conservative resistance to the stimuli of change, so often attributed to them. The cumulative effect of these changes and adoption of new technologies produced what has been called the Green Revolution. In most of these areas the farmers, especially those belonging to traditional peasant castes with inborn agricultural skills, were able to raise production from land and, with the rise of population and prices, they grew in wealth. This was particularly true in the wheat-production belt of the Punjab, the rice cultivation areas in coastal Andhra Pradesh and the sugar-cane belt in Maharashtra. Intensive cultivation of rice and other cash crops was undertaken in some areas like Kerala as a result of incentives provided by the government during the first decades of Indian planning, so much so that famines became the thing of past. India's food production trebled from a bare 50 million tonnes in 1950-1 to 150 million tonnes in 1984-5. So far, in terms of productivity, it has been a success story, despite shortfalls on occasion owing to flood or drought, as happened in the 1960s.³⁰

It is true that the entire surplus labour in the agriculture sector, i.e. the landless rural poor, was not absorbed in the villages. Yet the rural economy had been diversified through the promotion of cottage industries, handicrafts, and during the first two decades of independence considerable progress was made in this regard. Jawaharlal Nehru had expected that the surplus labour would be absorbed by the big industries, as well as by the middle-range economic enterprises producing manufactures, thus generating employment. This vision of Jawaharlal Nehru was not fulfilled since the problem was complicated by the population explosion which also had an effect on economic advance in the country. All the same, a silent revolution of tremendous significance had been achieved by removing major constraints on growth, which were a legacy of a colonial and a feudal past.

In general terms, the First Five-Year Plan launched by Jawaharlal Nehru was a considerable success; nearly 90 per cent of the targets, both in the sphere of agriculture and of industry, were achieved. Alongside the land reforms, the government launched the Community Development Programme, beginning in October 1952, under which 55 development projects covering 25,000 villages with 16 million people were started. During the First Five-Year Plan period, under the same scheme 1,200 blocks comprising 1,20,000 villages with a population of about 80 million were covered, i.e. a fifth of India's population benefited by it. Under the village development programme covering 100,000 villages with a population of nearly 80 million, schools, hospitals and roads were built through voluntary labour, maintaining basic standards of public health and sanitation. Through the adult education programme and under block development offices, training in better agricultural methods and use of fertilizers was provided, and the value of literacy and education was stressed. By 1955, again, 750,000 acres of land were brought under irrigation; in addition 155,000 acres were brought under fruit and vegetables cultivation. Twelve thousand miles of roads were laid and 600 miles of essential drains were constructed by the voluntary labour of the village population. More than 14,000 village adult education centres were established and 6,000 new schools were started. Thanks to the infrastructure for growth laid by Jawaharlal Nehru, rural India began to pulsate with a new life and hope.³¹

The community development programmes broadly helped the landless labourers, most of whom were untouchables. Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking on the community projects in May 1952, referred to this specifically:

Really what we are committed to is not a few community centres but to working for the biggest community of all and that is the community of the people of India, more especially those who are down and out, those who

are backward. There are far too many backward people in this country. Besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribe organizations, there is an organization called the Backward Classes League. As a matter of fact, you can safely say that 96 per cent of the people of India are economically very backward. Indeed, apart from a handful of men, most of the people are backward. Anyhow, we have to think more of those who are more backward because we must aim at progressively producing a measure of equality in opportunity and other things. In the modern world today, you cannot go on for long having big gaps between those who are at the top and those who are at the bottom. You cannot make all men equal, of course. But we must at least give them equality of opportunity.³²

We have already touched upon the problem of abolition of zamindari through compensation. Jawaharlal Nehru has been criticized for being soft with the zamindars, since they were compensated in some measure for their losses in privileges and wealth. We have discussed this problem at great length in the earlier chapter on the agrarian question. Jawaharlal Nehru's views in this regard are worth quoting:

We in this country must not think of approaching our objectives through conflict and force. We have achieved many things by peaceful means and there is no reason why we should not do so. I am quite convinced that, if we try to attain our ideals and objectives, however high they may be by violent methods we shall delay matters greatly and help the growth of the very evils we are fighting. India is not only a big country with a good deal of variety; and if any one takes to the sword, he will inevitably be faced with the sword of someone else. This clash between swords will degenerate into fruitless violence and, in the process, the limited energies of the nation will be dissipated or, at any rate, greatly undermined. The method of peaceful progress is ultimately the method of democratic progress.³³

Thus, in the core sector of agrarian economy, land, which is the main source of production, was not nationalized. Only the upper crust of the society, the feudal classes, forming a kind of village aristocracy, was removed from positions of dominance in the countryside for ever, and all depressing conditions under which the peasantry functioned removed. The zamindars lost their land and privileges and the peasant was granted ownership of property rights, but the land was not equitably distributed among all peasants. In fact, it was not possible to do so; yet a kind of social equality and social justice, equality of opportunity to all was ensured. Social inequalities, exploitation and disabilities were removed, laying the foundation for economic betterment of the masses. Over the decades, a class of rich peasants, middle and small peasants did emerge in some areas like Punjab. The wealthy peasant proprietors gained dominance at the expense of the rural poor and small peasants. How best these issues will be resolved only time will show.

Jawaharlal Nehru was largely guided by the basic ideals of democracy and did not belong to any orthodox school of socialism. Hence he substantially modified the socialist concept, giving primacy of place to the peasant, confirming his right to hold land and property in the village. He conceived of an Indian rural scene brimming with happy and prosperous village communities. He was also aware that Indian agriculture could not be transformed soon into modern mechanized farming and, therefore, he sought to develop village industries to absorb surplus labour. He knew the entire labour force could not be absorbed even by a process of large-scale industrialization and the problem of unemployment and under-employment in the villages and towns continued to disturb the Government of India. In 1955-6, the government estimated the number of unemployed at 15 million. This had worried Jawaharlal Nehru a great deal, and he was deeply conscious of this problem. In his address to parliament in December 1952, he had warned the country about the dangers:

However rapid our industrialisation may be, it cannot possibly absorb more than a small part of the population of this country in the next ten, twenty or even thirty years. Hundreds of millions will remain who have to be employed chiefly in agriculture. These people must, in addition, be given employment in smaller industries like cottage industries and so on. Hence, the importance of village and cottage industries. I think the argument one often hears about big industry versus cottage and village industry is misconceived. I have no doubt that we cannot raise the people's level of existence without the development of major industries in this country; in fact, I will go further and say that we cannot even remain a free country without them. Certain things, like adequate defence, are essential to freedom and these cannot be had unless we develop industry in a major way. But we must always remember that the development of heavy industry does not by itself solve the problem of the millions in this country. We have to develop the village and cottage industry in a big way, at the same time making sure that in trying to develop industry, big and small, we do not forget the human factor. We are not merely out to get more money and more production. We ultimately want better human beings. We want our people to have greater opportunities, not only from an economic or material point of view but at other levels also.³⁴

In the sphere of industrialization, again, new experiments were made. Jawaharlal Nehru's ambition was to bring about rapid industrialization of India and to achieve this objective he launched the First and the Second Five-Year Plans. The essential features of the mechanics of industrialization were that the government took upon itself the responsibility of taking care of the key and basic industries such as power, energy, transport and communications, and exploration of oil. Nehru's

industrial policy resolution of 30 April 1956 declared that 'all industries of basic and strategic importance or in the nature of public utility service . . . and other industries which are essential and require investment on a scale which only the State in present circumstances could provide', should be the exclusive responsibility of the state. In these categories, heavy machinery for iron and steel production, mining, etc. was included. The initial industrial policy resolution of 1948 was strengthened and enlarged the functions of the public sector. The railways, ports, irrigation works, remained state-owned industries. While the public sector was given a commanding place in regulating the economy of the country, Nehru refused to resort to wholesale nationalization and the private sector was given ample opportunity to flourish without violating the main objectives of national economic policy. He assigned an important place to private enterprise in national planning. What he aimed at was to control the unbridled growth of money-power in private hands. He attempted to curb the instinct of amassing profits; allowed a fair wage to the wage earner; and through taxation and fiscal devices he attempted to control and regulate private enterprise as much as possible. In 1954, he said:

Undoubtedly private enterprise is useful so far as our country is concerned. We wish to encourage it, but the dominance which private enterprise had throughout the world during a certain period is no more. It is out of date in that sense of the word. For a planner, it has now a secondary place. Any system which is based on what is called the acquisitiveness of society is absolutely out of date; in modern thinking it is also considered immoral. That does not mean that we are doing away with private enterprise. I think there is much scope for it, and where you allow private enterprise, you should give scope, freedom and encouragement to it to develop, but we must realise that the day of the acquisitive element in society has not passed but is passing.³⁵

At the Avadi session of the Indian National Congress in 1955, Nehru declared that the objective of the Government was to build 'a socialistic pattern of society'. The resolution clearly stated that planned development was undertaken 'with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of national wealth'.³⁶ Thus, without being a doctrinaire socialist, he had deliberately chosen his objective: to mould the Indian society on a socialistic pattern. This gave the government flexibility of approach in solving the economic problem.

On both these points Jawaharlal Nehru has been greatly criticized on the premise that he refused to nationalize the economic sector, thus

allowing the growth of powerful industrial houses. On the question of nationalization, he observed: 'I think it is dangerous merely to nationalize something without being prepared to work it properly. . . . My idea of socialism is that every individual in the state should have equal opportunity in progress.'³⁷ He was also opposed to the idea of investing the state with too many activities which it could not control or perform effectively. As it was, the state-controlled enterprises under the Public Sector had already reached commanding heights, and primacy of place in economic planning was given to the Public Sector. This process has been maintained, and from merely 9 crores of rupees in 1951, the investments in the public sector by 1985 exceeded Rs 30,000 crores.³⁸ It is the public sector which built the essential infrastructure for industrialization in key areas such as production of iron and steel, heavy engineering, minerals and metals, transport equipment, and chemicals. This was in addition to the investments in irrigational and hydro-electric schemes, railways, post and telegraph and other means of communication. What Nehru had achieved in these spheres was highly commendable. He gave to India the concept of mixed economy in which both sectors could function, complementing each other and in the process help in regenerating the Indian economy as a whole. Yet he refused, despite his socialist ideals, to give more power to the state. He said:

I do not want State socialism of that extreme kind in which the State is all powerful and governs practically all activities. The State is very powerful politically. If you are going to make it very powerful economically also it would become a mere conglomeration of authority. I should, therefore, like decentralization of economic power. We cannot, of course, decentralise iron and steel and locomotives and such other big industries, but you can have small units of industries as far as possible on a co-operative basis with State control in a general way. I am not at all dogmatic about it. We have to learn from practical experience and proceed in our own way.³⁹

It is necessary to evaluate Jawaharlal Nehru's ideas on the regeneration of Indian economy. It has been often argued that he shifted his stand from his once avowed ideal of socialism by advocating the formation of a socialistic pattern of society; that his measures tended to create economic disparities and inequalities instead of promoting social justice and economic equality. The argument, no doubt, is to an extent justified. But all through his public career, Jawaharlal Nehru had pointed out that the most dominant urges of the people in India were the achievement for freedom and social justice, and that 'socialism and Marxism became the symbol of this urge for social justice'. He also sought to achieve a synthesis of different viewpoints pointing out that 'synthesis is our tradition'. He did not allow India to totally break away from her past, emphasizing that social reconstruction must 'fall within the wide

framework of socialist theory'. But, he asserted, 'the manner of its application will, however, have to depend on Indian conditions. They will have to depend on Indian industrial conditions, Indian cultural conditions and, to some extent, on what may be called the genius of the Indian people. All these have to be taken together.'⁴⁰ To resolve the conflict of class interests, he had already taken the step of removing by peaceful methods the big jagirdars, talukdars, zamindars and the princely order in order to break-up a well-established exploitative system which he thought was anachronistic in modern times. He also firmly believed that India was neither capable of annihilating classes with vested interests by means of violence, nor was it necessary to do so, since the process would lead to a large-scale disruption of public life and put an end to any prospect of progress and development, which India could ill-afford in the 1950s. He felt that socialism ultimately aimed at the elimination of monopoly and the profit motive, and a regulation of class relations, which he thought he could achieve through his taxation policies and other devices:

We have deliberately laid down as our objective a socialist pattern of society. Personally I think that the acquisitive society, which is the base of capitalism, is no longer suited to the present age. We have to evolve a higher order more in keeping with modern trends and conditions and involving not so much competition but much greater co-operation. We have accepted socialism as our goal not only because it seems to us right and beneficial but because there is no other way for the solution of our economic problems. It is sometimes said that rapid progress cannot take place by peaceful and democratic methods. I do not accept this proposition. Indeed, in India today any attempt to discard democratic methods would lead to disruption and would thus put an end to any immediate prospect of progress. . . .

Whether in land or industry, or in the governmental apparatus, institutional changes become necessary from time to time as functions change. A new set of values will replace those that have governed the old acquisitive society based on the profit motive. The problem before us is ultimately to change the thinking and activities of hundreds of millions of people, and to do this democratically by their consent.⁴¹

As a creative thinker, he blended his radicalism with hard realism, and taking inspiration from the Indian culture, which basically represented a synthesis of cultural traits derived from many different philosophical thought processes, he attempted a synthesis even at the level of economics. As is obvious, he advanced a cogent and philosophical rationale for adopting a socialist pattern of society as the goal of India.

Finally, Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to set up a welfare state in which the masses and people from different walks of life benefited substantially;

a state in which their social status and standard of living could be raised. His concept of planning for a socialist pattern of life or the development of a welfare state, was dependent on a most important requisite, viz. 'a considerable increase in national income', which first and foremost must be achieved. While he laid stress on the removal of disparities he cautioned that 'Socialism is not the spreading out of poverty. The essential thing is there must be wealth and production. . . . Therefore, whether it is industry or agriculture, the one and the primary test is whether you are adding to the wealth of the country by increasing the production of the country.' Commenting on the role of private and public sector in the national economy, he pointed out that 'the whole philosophy underlying this plan is to take advantage of every possible way of growth and not to do something which suits some doctrinaire theory or imagine we have grown because we have satisfied some textbook maxim of a hundred years ago. We talk of nationalization as if nationalization were some kind of a magic remedy for every ill.'⁴² And again:

We cannot have a welfare state in India with all the socialism or even communism in the world unless our national income goes up greatly. Socialism or communism might help you to divide your existing wealth, if you like, but in India, there is no existing wealth for you to divide; there is only poverty to divide. It is not a question of distributing the wealth of the few rich men here and there. That is not going to make any difference in our national income. We might adopt that course for the psychological good that might come out of it. But from the practical point of view, there is not much to divide in India because we are a poor country. We must produce wealth, and then divide it equitably. How can we have a welfare state without wealth? Wealth need not mean gold and silver but wealth in goods and services. Our economic policy must therefore aim at plenty. Until very recently economic policies have often been based on scarcity. But the economics of scarcity has no meaning in the world of today.⁴³

In spite of the weighty arguments advanced by the socialists, communists and other critics of Jawaharlal Nehru for his adopting a mixed economy, it must be observed that the economic progress attained in the post-independence period has been phenomenal. If India is self-reliant in food, in defence production and several sectors of economy today, it is owing to the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru. India today is among the ten most advanced industrialized countries of the world, with the third largest scientific and technical manpower resources, with a high degree of professional, managerial, scientific and technical skills and competence. These developments have been achieved through internal generation of its own resources. Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1964, while reviewing the progress made in India through the democratic process observed:

Some people think that our progress since Independence has been slow. I do not think that this is correct. Considering the background of India and her people, and the necessity of changing the social structure of the country, I think that the progress we have made is substantial. It has laid the foundations for future advance, and it has done so on a democratic basis. This future should be more rapid than the past has been.⁴⁴

It must be observed that lately even in the socialist countries more and more incentives have been given to individuals so that the economy of these countries could flourish; hitherto most of them have remained fairly incapable of solving the problems of meeting adequately the food and other basic needs of the individual, despite decades of planned development through totalitarian methods.

Acharya Narendra Deva, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers the country has produced, analysed Jawaharlal Nehru's ideas in a proper perspective. In 1946, he wrote on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, assessing his role and evaluating his concepts and idealism. It is an excellent analysis and I can do no better than reproduce what he had written:

He [Jawaharlal Nehru] believes in some of the fundamental principles of scientific socialism, yet he is not prepared to swear by everything taught by Marx and Lenin. He does not subscribe to any rigid ideology. . . .

He is impatient with those who mouth revolutionary phraseology, in season and out of season, and who always harp on the theme that the country is in the throes of revolution. He would not sacrifice the immediate possibilities for a doubtful future. . . .

He, however, believes in ethical social conduct and has a deep sense of human values. He has faith in ideals of social progress. He believes in planning life for democracy and freedom. He is against totalitarianism and wants to find an equation between individual liberty and planned economic order. . . .

But if I were asked to sum his social philosophy in a neat phrase, I would say that it is 'democratic socialism'. Socialist ideals inspire his conduct because in his opinion they alone represent enduring human values and without these a full, free and co-operative life is not possible.⁴⁵

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Chapter XI

Last Phase of National Revolutionary Movement: An Evaluation

Santimay Ray

THE PRESENT ESSAY deals with the distinctive features of the national revolutionary movement during the last phase of its revival, extending over the period from 1919 to 1935. The term 'terrorist movement' which is also utilized in what follows is a term invented by the British, with the intention of depriving the movement of any moral perspective, and denigrating it in the eyes of national and international public opinion. As against British denigration, the national revolutionary movement subsumes the sum total of the political activities of the secret societies in Bengal which had as their objective the overthrow of British rule in India by organized armed uprising and other activities, e.g. assassination of government officials, robbery and forgery.¹

The period under review has special significance in the history of the freedom movement in India, for the simple reason that it formed a sort of bridge between the two major national mass movements, Non-Cooperation (1919-22) and Civil Disobedience (1930-2), led by Mahatma Gandhi, during which Gandhiji's conversion from a 'loyal servant of the British Empire to an avowed enemy of Satanic Government'² was complete.

The defeat of the wartime plans to subvert the British rule by a combination of secret national revolutionary parties like Ghadar, Anushilan, Jugantar and Deoband (1915-8) and the prospect of constitutional reform, as announced in the Montagu-Chelmsford declaration, combined with the notorious Rowlatt Act of 1919, brought a new situation, pregnant with tremendous possibilities. The frustration and disappointment amongst the leaders of Congress and Muslim League who came to a working understanding in the famous Lucknow Pact (1916) began to generate suppressed anger. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, after his release from six years of imprisonment, supported the home rule movement initiated by Annie Besant, sensing the defiant mood of the Indian people (1918).³ Victorious Indian soldiers returned to their villages and

towns with new experience of the world outside. The post-war price rise seriously affected the living conditions of Indian workers. The All India Trade Union Congress was born in 1920.⁴

In the international sphere, the fourteen-point programme of Wilson and the formation of the League of Nations which raised hopes and aspirations, though temporary, in Europe, was preceded by the world-shaking upheaval in Russia. Maps were redrawn in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. In India it was a time of great mass awakening as a reaction to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, and stirring within the Islamic world over the Khilafat issue. The Indian National Congress had regrouped and reorganized itself under Gandhiji's leadership in the historic Nagpur Congress of 1920. The call for united and common struggle against the Raj was on the agenda. The whole country resounded with the battle cry of '*Hindu-Muslim Ek Ho*', '*Gandhi-Alibhai Zindabad*'. The British Government was for the first time now faced with an ultimatum from a united Indian people. All the national revolutionaries in jail or in internment had been released after the declaration of general amnesty (1919). The revolutionaries thus found themselves in a completely new situation. They had a feel of it in prison, even in the remote Andamans. But coming out, back into the complex political reality, it took them months to understand and re-assess the potential forces of struggle before integrating with the current of national mass upsurge of the twenties under Gandhiji's leadership.⁵

One of the most significant political developments after the war had been the emergence of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das on the national political arena and his unqualified acceptance of Gandhian leadership in the non-cooperation struggle which very soon engulfed the whole subcontinent.⁶ Chittaranjan formed a link between the turbulent militancy of revolutionary nationalism and Gandhian extremism in the national movement. He could also mobilize substantial support and fruitful collaboration of the nationalist Muslim leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Fazlul Haq, the poet, Nazrul Islam, Maulana Akram Khan, Muhammad Ismail Shirajee and Muhammad Giashuddin Ahmed.

By the end of 1919, with the release of the national revolutionary leaders, their movement entered into a new phase in the history of the national liberation movement. To the Nagpur Congress, at the call of Gandhiji, leaders of the Jugantar group sent a high-powered delegation, led by Dr Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyay, Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, Nalini Kishore Ghosh, Amarendra Chattopadhyay and Surendra Mohan Ghosh to discuss the problem of general strategy and the tactical line in the coming non-violent battle that Gandhiji wanted to lead.⁷ Similarly leaders of the Anushilan group like Maharaj Trailakya Chakravarty,

Naren Sen, Rabi Sen and Pratul Ganguly, met and discussed the all-important strategical issue and informed Gandhiji about their decision after having thrashed out their own differences.⁸ In fact, for the national revolutionaries it was their first baptism in mass movement. They entered the Congress at various organizational levels and tried to implement the resolutions of the Nagpur Congress. The Congress in Bengal under Chittaranjan, ably assisted by the leaders of Jugantar and Atma-unnati, became a cohesive militant force. Leaders like Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta and young Subhas Bose became the close associates of Chittaranjan with their contacts amongst revolutionary organizations through Surendra Mohan Ghosh of Jugantar, Pratul Ganguly of Anushilan and Bipin Ganguly and Jyotish Ghosh of Atma-unnati.⁹ This strategical shift of policy had been adhered to till 1934, and provided them a sort of mass cover in districts like Chittagram, Mymensingh, Barisal, Midnapore, Comilla, Fadaripur, 24-Parganas and Rangpur, and more or less in Kanpur, Allahabad, Delhi, Lahore and Saharanpur.¹⁰

Another significant feature in the policy of two major revolutionary parties in Bengal was the change in their long- and short-term perspective and consequent evolution of a new tactical line of armed seizure of power by simultaneous mass uprising, which remained their main objective. The Easter uprising in Ireland and the October Revolution in Russia were the two models which partly influenced the revolutionary leaders in formulating their strategy. In this new situation, major groups like Anushilan, Jugantar and Atma-unnati formulated a fourfold strategy as follows: (a) to maintain contact with the newly born Socialist Soviet Republic for getting sinews of revolution through M.N. Roy and Abani Mukhopadhyay;¹¹ (b) to get involved in the social service activities, especially in Muslim-majority areas as in the case of Mymensingh, Rangpur, Barisal, Comilla, Burdwan and Chittagong during epidemics, flood or other types of physical and natural calamities;¹² (c) to enter and capture the Congress from provincial headquarter to village level;¹³ and (d) to organize 'agit prop' and plan publication, more or less on a semi-permanent basis.¹⁴

But the process of their development on the basis of this strategy was not easy and smooth. In spite of broad uniformity in outlook there were strong differences of opinion among the revolutionaries on many strategical issues. Dr Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay emphasized the four basic components of a revolutionary movement — students, peasants, workers and soldiers.¹⁵ But this remained more or less an ideal, yet to be implemented in practice. Upendra Nath Banerji and Hemendra Chandra Kanungo, two of the earlier leaders of the Jugantar group of Calcutta Anushilan, in their memoirs, expressed their doubt on the efficacy of terrorist methods and too much dependence on a religious

orientation. 'An inner revolution had started among us by that time.'¹⁶ Sachindranath Sanyal, the chief lieutenant of Rash Behari Bose in planning and organizing the mutiny of the Indian soldiers in northern India, later convicted in the Benaras Conspiracy Case and transported to the Andamans,¹⁷ wrote in his memoirs, *Bondijibon*: 'Though we cherished the same ideals and were followers of the same path yet there were differences amongst us on many questions. Nights were spent on the discussions and conflicts on these details, but the conflict of opinion was not resolved.'¹⁸

1. Rise of 'Revolt Groups'

David Laushey, describing the tense political climate generated just at a time the Raj was initiating calculated steps towards the devolution of political power to Indian hands, observed: 'Here then was an important connection between the terrorist and the main stream of the Indian Nationalist Movement. British over-response to the threat of terrorism solidified a wide spectrum of Indian opinion behind the leadership of Gandhi.'¹⁹ He was probably near the truth. The failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement, signified in the Bardoli resolution of the Congress Working Committee, preceded the calling off of the movement after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 stunned the entire nation, not to speak of the revolutionaries.

According to an Intelligence Report, 'Being satisfied by Mr Gandhi's arrest and conviction in 1922 that his programme had definitely failed the terrorists decided then to resume the campaign of violence. There is reason to believe that the Chittagong Congress of April 1922 was the occasion of the decision to resume violent methods.' This second terrorist campaign was ushered in like the first, by a resumption of terrorist propaganda in the extremist press. Within a short time of the repeal of the Indian Press Act in March 1922, mushroom vernacular journals like *Atma Sakti*, the *Sarathi* and the *Muktikam Bijali* and others began to publish articles having a direct or indirect tendency to excite violent hostility against government and the British. The commonest type of propaganda was to denounce the economic oppression by the British in India, to extol in mystical and sometimes in poetic language, freedom and self-sacrifice, and to publish appreciative articles in praise of revolutionaries. This last was a new feature of revolutionary propaganda and its nature will appear from the following extract from the annual report on Indian newspaper in Bengal for the year 1923:

A noteworthy feature in the year under review was the large amount of writing in praise of old revolutionaries. The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* referred to them as selfless youths with indomitable resolution, who kindled the lamp of life by undergoing death. The journal *Prabartak* in its March issue, in

continuation of previous issues extolled Kanailal Dutta (the murderer of the approver Narendralal Gossain in the Alipore Conspiracy Case). These were primarily narratives. Highly appreciative biographical notes on Jatindra Mukherjee began to appear in many papers. It was explained however that these laudations did not necessarily mean adoption of their methods. *Sarathi* justified the same point: 'The distrust of the people must be removed. To give them such training, the life stories of self-sacrificing heroic patriots must be recited to them. We do not adopt their methods but are we not on that account to respect their renunciation, their heroism and their patriotism.'²⁰

According to another official report,

A regular campaign was instituted in the Calcutta Press in honour of the anniversary of the death of Jatindra Mukherjee, who was killed in a pitched battle with the police near Balasore on 9th September, 1915, among the newspapers participating being *Swadeshi*, *Servant*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, *Bande Mataram*, *Atmasakti* and *Sarathi*.²¹

The emotional and intellectual urge thus created, got further impetus from the news and stories about the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Easter Uprising in Ireland, the revolutions in Turkey, Egypt and in China, which passed through the censorship of the British authorities in India through indigenous channels.^{21a}

Formative Stage

This obviously called for a departure from the tactical line hitherto followed after the war by Bengal's major revolutionary parties like Anushilan and Jugantar, viz. avoiding open confrontation with the British Government and pursuing a cautious policy of organizational preparation.²² This line had been formulated on the basis of the rich experience of the failure during the First World War and the development during the post-war period. When Gandhiji's non-violent uprising fizzled out, and the promise of swaraj within a year proved to be illusory, the revolutionary parties, both old and new, tried to break the stalemate and put forward their new plan of active struggle.

Under the general amnesty of 23 December 1919, all the leaders and activists of these parties had been released from jail and detention; warrants against some of the leaders were withdrawn. Most prominent amongst them were Naren Sen, Kedareshwar Sen, Trailakya Chakraborty, Rabi Sen, Ramesh Acharya, Pratul Ganguly, Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chattopadhyay of Anushilan; and Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupen Dutta, Jibon Lal Chattopadhyay, Bhupati Majumdar, Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Hem

Ghosh, Purna Das, Satkari Bandopadhyay, Jatin Ray, Atul Ghosh, Prof. Jyotish Ghosh, Bipin Bihari Ganguly and Harinarayan Chanda of the Jugantar-Atma-unnati combine.

'The period that followed was one of great political and economic difficulty,'²³ aggravated, they felt by the 'abject betrayal' on the part of Gandhiji.

Near about 1920-1 Harinarayan Chanda and Jogesh Bhattacharya of Chittagong brought out a fortnightly called *Student* under the guidance of Professor Jyotish Ghosh of the Atma-unnati group. Immediately after his return from the Punjab, a secret meeting was called at the Cherry Press enclave in Bowbazar, where, among others who attended, were Surya Sen, Nagen Sen and Charu Bikash Dutta.²⁴ Here a group was formed, the Red Bengal Party, a new arrival in the family with a difference in its outlook and programme. According to Harinarayan Chanda, manufacturing of bombs and their distribution to various centres was to be under his direct charge. From Uttar Pradesh the participants were Sachin Sanyal and Chandrashekhar Azad.²⁵ Intelligence reports partly corroborated the above statement:

These two Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Sachindra Nath Sanyal with other young hotheads did not approve of the leaders' policy. They had already incurred the displeasure of Anushilan leaders, Naren Sen and others by their independent work in the United Provinces; and Sanyal's issue of the Revolutionary pamphlet 'Appeal to my countrymen' in January 1925, further annoyed the leaders. During the year, some of these rebellious elements combined together to form what is sometimes known as the New Violence Party.²⁶

Earlier, in April 1922, during the annual conference of the Bengal Provincial Congress in Chittagong, many important revolutionaries organized a secret conference, to streamline their parties with renewed vigour and to reorganize them for immediate action.²⁷ There are reasons to believe that in the Chittagong conference (1922) representatives of Atma-unnati who formed the Red Bengal Party, or, according to police report, New Violence Party, met and discussed their future plan and programme. The participants were Bipin Ganguly, Harinarayan Chanda, Deven De, Surya Sen, Santosh Mitra, Ananta Singh and few others.²⁸ This is corroborated in the autobiographical writings of G.N. Chanda, younger brother of H.N. Chanda, and Ganesh Ghosh.²⁹

While the Anushilan and Jugantar leaders were accused of 'vegetating' by their younger militants, an action programme was initiated by Prof. Jyotish Ghosh and his followers in close collaboration with Chittagong groups of Yugantar, led by Surya Sen, Nagen Sen and Ananta Singh.³⁰ The result was the attempt on the life of Charles Tegart

by Gopinath Saha on 12 January 1924, which however failed due to mistaken identity. Gopinath was hanged on 1 March. A subsequent attempt jointly made by Ananta Singh and Deven De did not materialize due to miscalculation.

The Government of India had immediately taken recourse to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1924 and made extensive arrests. A series of minor robberies, however, followed for the collection of funds. In many cases, these caused deaths to the resisters as in the case of the Sakharitola Post Office Robbery and E.B.R. Mail Robbery in Chittagong (1924). But the most revealing documents and source materials about the growth of an All India Co-ordinating Centre came to light in the famous Dakhineswar Conspiracy Case of 1926. It revealed for the first time the close collaboration of Hindusthan Republican Association with New Violence Party of Prof. Jyotish Ghosh and the Chattagram Republican Army of Surya Sen.³¹ Rajen Lahiri of the Benaras Centre of the Hindusthan Republican Association (HRA) was arrested in Sovabazar Street. The Dakhineswar raid resulted in the arrest, along with others, of Ananta Hari Mitra, Promode Chowdhury of Chittagong Anushilan, and Biren Banerjee. Surya Sen and Deven De escaped. Jatin Das, Santosh Mitra, Harinarayan Chanda, Ganesh Ghosh and Narayan Bando-padhyay were arrested later under Regulation III of 1818.³² While the Calcutta centres suffered badly, the UP centres fared even worse. The top-ranking leaders of the HRA plunged into an action which did not measure up to their higher objective and revolutionary social vision. The Kakori train robbery (1925) brought glory, without any significant advance. But it did signify a distinct shift and a new alignment of the revolutionary personalities towards a programme of immediate action to produce terror among the alien rulers and their votaries. It further reflected their urge to frame a closely integrated programme within a secular, democratic and Socialist framework, like their Russian Narodnik counterparts.³³

An interesting recovery during the search at Sovabazar Street was a copy of the official programme of this party and of the All-India Co-ordinating Centre. It quoted Mazzini: 'Actions are the book of the masses . . . ideas ripen quickly when nourished by the blood of martyrs.' It went on to enumerate the following stages of Indian Revolution: (a) individual actions such as the murder of high officials, the capture of government arms and ammunition, the destruction of government institutions, jail-breaks, the destruction of bridges, the wrecking of trains and the murder of spies and informers; (b) simultaneous demonstrations; (c) insurrection, including guerilla warfare, revolution.³⁴ According to an Intelligence report this programme shows that terrorists, profiting by their past experience, had come to the conclusion that

it was necessary to have a plan of campaign on a wide and systematic scale rather than indulging in indiscriminate and scattered murders and dacoities.³⁵

The party was preparing for a series of spectacular bomb outrages when the sudden arrest of the eleven leaders at Dakhineswar and Sovabazar interrupted its plans and dislocated its organization for a time. Surya Sen, the leader of the newly formed New Violence Party, maintained active contact with the terrorist cells in UP, Punjab, Bihar, Orissa and Assam.³⁶ After his arrest in October 1926, the leadership of this group passed to Bijan Kumar Banerji, the Bengal leader of the HRA who infused new life into the party. On 13 January 1927, Bijan was arrested in the Sukea Street Case and sentenced to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment. The leadership then passed to one Birendranath Bhattacharya of Kalagira, Dacca. But he was arrested soon in a police raid in Deoghar. A huge number of revolvers and bombs, a volume of revolutionary literature, copies of 'yellow and white' leaflets which had figured so prominently in the Kakori Conspiracy Case were also confiscated.³⁷

In the subsequent Deoghar Conspiracy Case, Birendra and his brother Surendra Bhattacharya were sentenced to 3 years' rigorous imprisonment. It appeared that with Dakhineswar and Deoghar Conspiracy Cases along with Kakori Conspiracy Case in UP, the first phase of the emergence of post-war revolutionary groups in Bengal came to an end. Almost all the principal leaders were in jail or under detention since the passing of Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act in October 1924. In jails they could find enough time and opportunity to come closer to each other and to exchange their assessments of their mistakes and formulate future plans for revolutionary action. The leaders of the two major parties, Anushilan and Jugantar, took the decision to merge since they considered that rivalry between them was ruinous to the cause of revolution. They made an all-comprehensive programme based on the experience of Russian and Irish models. Obviously their past experience of disunity and petty rivalry made them more cautious about their future action. For the final meticulous preparation, both technical and ideological work was necessary, and the younger sections, more virile and impatient, differed with them and characterized the attitude of the 'old dasas' (meaning thereby the leaders of these two parties) as 'professional shirkers, talkers and jailgoers'.³⁸ After their release in 1928, the younger elements started hectic confabulation in different districts especially Barisal, Mymensingh, Dacca, Chittagong, Faridpur (Madaripur), Hooghly and Calcutta.³⁹

Out of those activities the second generation of Revolt Groups, as they were then called, slowly emerged. Satish Pakrashi, Niranjana Sen of

Barisal, Pratul Bhattacharya of Mymensingh, Brojen Das of Dacca and Jagadish Chatterji of Barisal revolted in the Anushilan Party and joined with their counterparts, Sudhir Aich, Mukul Sen, Bihari Biswas, Nalini Das and Sachin Kar of the Barisal Jugantar Party.⁴⁰ On the eve of Calcutta session of Indian National Congress, frantic political activities and secret discussions in different places like Cherry Press, Bowbazar, Hardinge Hostel, 3 Marquis Square, 85 Mechuabazar Street and Canning Hostel thus led to the birth of the second generation of the Revolt Groups. Nalini Das, a prominent figure of Barisal wrote in his autobiographical sketch about the meeting of the revolutionary group in Hardinge Hostel.⁴¹ Satish Pakrashi one of the foremost leading figures of the Revolt Group in Bengal made the following observations on the genesis of the Revolt Group in his autobiographical study, *Agnidiner Katha*:

Youth of Dacca no longer believed in the old policy of passivity pursued by the old leaders of the parties. Discontent was growing. Niranjan Sen, youth leader of Barisal, brought the same message, so also Provat Chakraborty of Comilla, who spoke of the growing militancy among the rank and file of Anushilan. During the Calcutta Congress session some of them met secretly in Park Circus. They wanted an immediate programme of action. From Lahore came Bhagat Singh along with four comrades of the HSRA and met in a Conference with his own comrades of South Calcutta, led by Jatin Das, Biswanath Mukherjee and Benoy Ray. If the U.P., Bengal and Punjab comrades could organize an armed insurrection jointly a new revolutionary situation could thus be created. This was the considered opinion of the Punjab revolutionaries. Getting disillusioned by their talks with the leaders of the two major parties, the Punjab and U.P. revolutionaries decided on a joint plan of action with us. As a follow-up action Jatin Das went to Allahabad and Lahore to learn the technique of a new type of bomb making. I was inspired by my discussion with Jatin Das, Benoy Ray of South Calcutta and Satin Ray, Brojen Das of Dacca.⁴²

Ananta Singh and Nalini Das, the two stalwarts of the Advance Group also expressed the same feelings.⁴³

According to an Intelligence report, Niranjan Sen and two others, realizing that the discontented elements of both parties demanded sensational actions, formed a new, amalgamated party for immediate action — surprise attacks on the armed police and guerilla warfare as described in Danbreen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom*.⁴⁴ During this second phase, the Jugantar branches of Barisal, Chittagong, and Faridpur (Madaripur) and the Anushilan branches of Dacca, Mymensingh, South Calcutta and Behrampore came forward to organize themselves for such immediate actions. The Bengal Volunteer (BV) Group of Dacca also joined this Revolt Group and opted for the path of struggle. They were also called the Advance Group.⁴⁵ Satish Pakrashi of Dacca, Surya Sen

and Ambika Chakraborty of Chittagong, Jatin Das and Benoy Ray of Calcutta, Niranjana Sen of Barisal, Provat Chakraborty of Tripura and Jatin Bhattacharya of Faridpur took the leadership in this new plan. They met in Rangpur during the early part of 1929, when the Bengal Provincial Political Conference was holding its session there, and there they ratified their programme.⁴⁶ According to the plan, collection of arms was given the top priority. Jatin Das was entrusted with this all-important task along with keeping contact with the revolutionaries of Northern India. He left for Agra and was arrested along with Sardar Bhagat Singh in the Lahore Conspiracy Case by the middle of 1929.⁴⁷ In November 1929, Surya Sen, Ganesh Ghosh, Niranjana Sen and Satish Pakrashi met in Calcutta to discuss the problems of armed uprising. Due to short supply of arms, they planned to raid armouries in three districts — Chattagram, Mymensingh and Barisal in the first instance. In the same month a red leaflet was widely distributed amongst the youth of Bengal urging them to join in the coming uprising.⁴⁸

But on 18 December 1929, a sudden swoop by the Calcutta police on 85, Mechuabazar Street, and the subsequent arrests all over Bengal, including of leaders like Satish Pakrashi and Niranjana Sen, made the situation shaky for Surya Sen and other leaders. They proceeded very cautiously and camouflaged their subversive preparations by involving themselves in the open movement of the Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji till the night of 18 April 1930, when they electrified the youth of India by their daring action known in the history of freedom struggle as the Chattagram Youth Uprising.⁴⁹ It was the green signal for action by other Revolt Groups and influenced the leaders and rank and file of Anushilan and Yugantar to opt for a programme of immediate action — individual terrorism, political robbery, etc. — which practically reached its end in the Lebong shooting on 8 May 1934.⁵⁰

The Revolt Groups in Bengal thus could not just be whisked away, as some of the leaders of Anushilan and Jugantar tried to do in the beginning. Some members of the groups were even denounced as *agents provocateur*.⁵¹ But ultimately they earned recognition. During the second phase, more Revolt Groups were being formed in Faridpur, under Panchanan Chakraborty, Jatin Bhattacharya, Lalit Burman and Suren Das of Tripura, Pramatha Bhowmick and Nirmal Das of Khulna, and Abdur Rezzaque Khan of Calcutta, the founder of the Independent Party.⁵²

2. Revolutionary Actions : Response and Counter Response

Intelligence reports attribute to Jugantar the first terrorist actions in this new decade — dacoities in May 1923 at Kona near Howrah, Ultadanga and Garpar in Calcutta on 30 July, and at Shakharitola where a post-

master was murdered. In the subsequent trial, the Alipore Conspiracy Case, of the seven accused, all were acquitted except one, Barendra Ghosh. He was sentenced to death but the sentence was commuted later to transportation for life. He belonged to Santosh Mitra's Revolt Group, styled in police records as the New Violence or Red Bengal Party. 'In December 1923 was committed at Chittagong, Assam, Bengal Railway Dacoity by some Bhadraklok youth armed with revolver.'⁵³ They came into open conflict with the police and, as a result, 'one sub-inspector who had arrested one of the accused in this case was shot at Chittagong'. Obviously it was the action of Surya Sen's Revolt Group under Ananta Singh.

Attempt on Charles Tegart

On 12 January 1924, Gopinath Saha, an activist of the Santosh Mitra Group of the New Violence Party was deputed to assassinate Charles Tegart, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta, who was considered to be the main target of the revolutionary Revolt Group headed by Jyotish Ghosh. On that fateful day, a young man dressed in a white dhoti, khaki shirt and black shoes, fired at Mr Day from a distance of about eight to ten feet, mistaking him for Charles Tegart. The bullet missed its mark. The youth was arrested, tried and executed on 1 March 1924 in Presidency Jail. He walked up to the gallows unaided and smiling. In the last letter to his mother, Gopinath wrote that every Indian mother should give birth to a son like him and that every home should be sanctified by a mother like his. In the courtroom his last words were, 'May every drop of my blood sow the seeds of freedom in every home of India.' 'So long [as] repressions such as Jallianwalabagh, Chandpur etc., would go on, this state of things would continue. A time would come when the Government would feel the consequence.'⁵⁴ The impact of this incident was quite interesting: (1) Government immediately took recourse to preventive arrests of all national revolutionary leaders of Jugantar, Anushilan (in spite of their opposition of the actions) and the leaders of the New Violence Party like Surya Sen, Ganesh Ghosh and other Revolt Groups. (2) The Bengal Congress as a whole turned more left and the laudatory resolution on young Gopinath at the Sirajganj Provincial Conference (1924) was followed by a similar one at the Faridpur Conference, in spite of the opposition of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, demonstrated the strength and popularity of the national revolutionaries in spite of their differences and inner contradictions. Gopinath became a symbol of a new, resurgent, youth movement in Bengal. (3) It gave the Jugantar Party a distinct edge over others as a dominant force in the Bengal Congress. (4) It encouraged the newly formed Hindusthan Republican Party, led by Sachin Sanyal, Ramprasad Bismil and Jogesh Chattopadhyay, to expand its base in Bihar, UP, Punjab and Assam.⁵⁵

In March 1924, the Calcutta police in the course of a search discovered a bomb manufacturing factory. It was considered to be a very powerful one. The Government of Bengal, under the Criminal Law Amendment Act hauled up many top-ranking leaders of the Swarajya Party which included, amongst others, Subhas Chandra Bose, then occupying the post of Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, an autonomous self-administered institution considered to be 'the abode of terrorists in Bengal.'⁵⁶ On 10 November 1925 another dangerous bomb factory was discovered by the Calcutta police at Dakshineswar.

In July 1924, the New Violence Party published a leaflet known as the Red Bengal leaflet, urging the youth to enlist as soldiers in 'death squads' to rouse the dormant, slumbering people.⁵⁷ The nationalist newspapers raised a storm of protest against these arrests and detentions without trial. Even Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das condemned the government's action in unequivocal terms. According to the official version 'the raid yielded nothing in the way of arms, ammunition and explosives, but in thirty-three places revolutionary literatures were found and the immediate object of the raid was fulfilled. The revolutionary organizations and their campaign were for the time being thoroughly dislocated and disorganized.'⁵⁸

Alipore Jail Murder (1926)

Amongst many futile attempts initiated by the revolutionaries to kill a number of police officers, there was one daring and successful action in May 1926 when Bhupendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Special Superintendent of the Intelligence Branch, was murdered in Alipore Central Jail. The whole administration was taken aback. Public morale ran high. In the subsequent trial, Ananta Hari Mitra and Promode Ranjan Chowdhury, already convicted in the Dakshineswar Conspiracy Case, were sentenced to death. Ananta and Promode almost ran to the gallows singing *Bande Mataram* and waving goodbye to all — friends and foes. According to an eyewitness, Dr Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, leader of the Jugantar Party, Alipore Central Jail resounded with slogans raised from all the barracks.⁵⁹ He has left a stirring account of their martyrdom, which speaks highly of their courage and devotion to the motherland, whatever views we might entertain about the quality of their consciousness and about their ideology. Very soon Ananta Hari and Promode Ranjan became a revolutionary legend, and their biography, proscribed by the government, became a compulsory manual for every aspiring young revolutionary.⁶⁰

Kakori Heroes (1925-27)

With numerous and increasing numbers of revolutionary outbursts in

Bengal, UP and the Punjab did not lag behind. While Ananta Hari Mitra and Promode Ranjan Chowdhury held the torch of patriotism high in 1926, the Kakori heroes — Ramprasad Bismil, Thakur Roshan Singh, Rajen Lahiri and Ashfaqulla, made the year 1927 memorable by their spartan courage and exemplary self-possession, demonstrated on the eve of their executions.⁶¹

Since the formation of the Hindusthan Republican Association, Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chattopadhyay, the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti, and Ramprasad Bismil of the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case, very soon joined in this conclave and became one of the main organizers in UP. Along with Gendalal Dikshit, they became the authors of several actions in Sheganj, Bichpuri, Mainpuri etc. The Kakori train robbery on 9 August 1925 was not as successful and dramatic as similar actions in Bengal, but the subsequent trial and extreme penalty that was awarded to the accused, including death sentences to Ramprasad Bismil, Thakur Roshan Singh, Rajen Lahiri (he had already been sentenced to 10 years, imprisonment in the Dakshineswar Conspiracy Case) and Ashfaqulla at once drew the admiration of Indian youth, especially in Bengal. Other accused of this case — Sachin Sanyal, Jogesh Chattopadhyay, Manmath Gupta, Surendra Pande, Mukundalal Sharma and others were sentenced to various terms, from transportation for life to 7 years' imprisonment. Famous revolutionary, Chandrashekhar Azad, went underground and became one of the key men along with Bhagawati Charan and Yashpal till his death in an encounter with the police in Alfred Park at Allahabad in 1931.⁶²

These extremely vindictive sentences at once drew public sympathy throughout India. The trial was protracted. There was no dearth of publicity. There was a nationwide campaign for the commutation of the death sentences and the legal battle went on till the day of execution.

Rajendra Nath Lahiri was executed in the Gonda Jail on 17 December 1927. Ashfaqulla and Ramprasad Bismil went to the scaffold on 19 December 1927 in the Fyzabad and Gorakhpur Jails, almost at the same time.⁶³ Thakur Roshan Singh mounted the gallows in Naini Jail in December 1927. Before their martyrdom, the *National Herald* and other news media published reports of the martyrs' last reactions. 'With bold steps and smiling faces' Rajen Lahiri, in Gonda Jail on 13 December 1927, followed the warders and stood erect on the platform of the gallows and faced eternity in a cheerful mood. Ramprasad assured his mother that he would be kissing the gallows with 'greatest joy and utmost courage'. According to Jogesh Chattopadhyay, Thakur Roshan Singh 'remained notably self composed' till his end. The last words which escaped his lips were 'Bande Mataram'.⁶⁴ Ashfaqulla showed exemplary cool courage before kissing the gallows.

At the last interview with a friend, his brother and nephew who were allowed to see him in the Fyzabad Jail for the last time, he calmly told his sobbing relations that the least sorrow should not spoil the solemn occasion of great rejoicing. They should behave in a different way. He felt himself honoured to find him as a representative of his countrymen on whom had devolved the noble task of struggle for freedom of Motherland. They ought to be glad to find that one of their near relations, a brother and an uncle, had been sacrificing his life for the country. They ought to remember that there had been such high souled men like Kanailal and Khudiram in the Hindu Community and it was an additional privilege for him because most probably he happened to be the first Muhamadan to follow the footsteps of the martyrs of undying fame'.⁶⁵

The story of these martyrs spread to the farthest corners of Bengal and the present writer was thrilled to get a copy of a proscribed edition of Manindra Roy's book on the Kakori Conspiracy Case at the second session of All Bengal Students' Conference at Mymensingh in September 1929.⁶⁶

The heroic stoicism of the two youths, Ananta Hari and Promode Ranjan Chowdhury, electrified not only the inmates of Alipore Central Jail, but their robust patriotism drew hundreds of Indians in Bengal, UP and Punjab, if not in other places, into the currents of the national liberation movement.

By and large, the years 1925-7 were comparatively uneventful, except for the above incident, which was an off-shoot of the Dakshineswar Conspiracy Case.

The Saunders' Murder in Lahore (1928)

The year 1928 was marked by the anti-Simon Commission upsurge everywhere in India. Leadership was given by Indian National Congress and 'Go back Simon!' was the main battle cry. On 30 October 1928, the Simon Commission faced a large hostile crowd led by Lala Lajpat Rai at Lahore Station. The Lala was severely beaten by a British sergeant named Saunders and later succumbed to his head injury. The whole nation was stunned by this savagery. The HSRA decided to undertake retaliatory action. On 17 December, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukdev, Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagawati Charan, who by this time had become an expert in an improved type of bomb manufacturing, mistook Scot for Saunders, as they pounced upon him and his bodyguard. The action was over within a few minutes and they escaped. On 21 December in Lahore, at Shalimar Gate, an announcement was made in posters regarding this action on behalf of the 'Commander-in-Chief of the HSRA'.⁶⁷ The people of Lahore, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, expressed their joy, with an overtone of anxiety for what was to come.⁶⁸

The Bomb in the Assembly (1929)

Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Datta threw a bomb into the Central Legislative Assembly Hall in Delhi on 8 April 1929, when Sir George Schuster told the House about the viceroy's ruling on the Public Safety Bill. It was hurled from the midst of the packed gallery, not aimed at anybody, but to draw the attention of the House, the Indian people and the British rulers of India. This was immediately followed by the distribution of the 'Red pamphlet' which declared in clear terms:

It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear. . . . Let the Government know that while protesting against the Public Safety and Trade Disputes Bill and callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, on behalf of the helpless Indian mass, we want to emphasise the lesson repeated by history, that it is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill ideas. Great empires crumbled while ideas survive. We attach great sanctity to human life. But the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of a great Revolution, that will bring freedom to all, rendering exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable, Long Live Revolution.^{68a}

This action undoubtedly captured the imagination of young minds and drew them to captivating influence of the revolutionaries.

Earlier, in December 1928, in an all-India meeting of the revolutionaries on the grounds of Ferozeshah Kotla in Delhi, the Hindusthan Republican Association had been renamed, at the instance of Bhagat Singh, the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Army.⁶⁹ The evolution from a Republican Association into a Socialist Army is a significant ideological advance which any student of history can ill afford to ignore.⁷⁰

The martyrdom of the Kakori prisoners, the daring revolutionary action of Saunders' murder in Lahore, and the throwing of a bomb in the Assembly, along with Red pamphlets, much to the consternation of the panic-stricken Assembly members and overawed commoners in the public galleries, stirred national emotions. The prosecution and trial of Bhagat Singh and his associates did not take much time. They were sentenced to transportation for life and sent to Lahore to stand at the trial in the 3rd Lahore Conspiracy Case along with 27 others. Bhagawati Charan Vhora, one of the outstanding members of the HSRA died in January 1930 as a result of a bomb explosion during the trial in Lahore. Chandrashekhar Azad, the Commander-in-Chief designate, went on evading arrest along with Yashpal.⁷¹

Martyrdom of Jatin Das (13 September 1929)

One of the most outstanding revolutionary actions which followed closely on the April incident in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi, was the martyrdom of young Jatin Das of Bengal after 63 days of hunger

strike in Lahore Central Jail. As one of the leading figures of Hindusthan Socialist Republican Army, he was arrested and brought to trial in the famous Lahore Conspiracy Case, along with Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev, Shiv Verma, Jaydev Kapoor, Ajoy Ghosh and many others.

As a protest against the inhuman conditions in jail, Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutta decided to fast unto death. Jatin Das who reached Lahore in June 1929 joined them in sympathy. Ajoy Ghosh, one of the accused, in his book, *Bhagat Singh and his Comrades*, described the course of the struggle in the following words:

Determined to break us the jail officials removed all water from our cell and placed milk instead, in the pitcher. This was the worst ordeal imaginable. After a day, thirst grew unbearable. I would drag myself to the pitcher, hoping every time to find water but drew back at the sight of milk. It was maddening. If the man who had hit upon this device had been there before me I would have killed him. Outside the guard sat watching every moment, mute, impassive. . . . In the meantime sympathetic hunger strikes were taking place wherever there were political prisoners. A powerful mass movement had grown up to back our demands. . . . The Meerut Conspiracy Case prisoners went on hunger strike after a few days. The news flashed across the seas. It created a stir in England. World attention was focussed on conditions in Indian prisons.⁷²

While others had been slowly passing from life into the jaws of death by inches, the condition of Jatin Das took a serious turn on 24 July 1929. He was removed to the jail hospital. The news of the grave condition of certain prisoners due to the mass hunger strike agitated the minds of the leaders of the country. The All India Congress Committee, then holding its session at Allahabad, noted with concern on 26 July the barbarous methods adopted by the government. Never had a morning dawned fresher and more glorious than the 13th day of September 1929 in the life of Jatin. Kiran, younger brother of Jatin was awakened suddenly by Jatin's very low and soft voice, as if the life of the candle flickered bright before going out, and he whispered to Kiran, 'I do not wish my obsequies should be performed at Kali Bari of Lahore in the orthodox Bengali fashion.'⁷³ Kiran found his brother gasping for breath. As previously requested, Kiran and Bijay, a co-accused, sang Jatin's favourite song, 'Ekla Cholo Re', 'The light is out'.⁷⁴ 'Seldom in the history of India's national liberation movement, [could] martyrdom of a revolutionary . . . produce such sweep of national emotion throughout the length and breadth of the country and outside.' Lahore seemed to have been up in the early dawn of 14 September. People, both young and old, men and women, were on their way to the railway station with garlands strung by themselves with roses, Jatin's favourite flower, and with flowers in

baskets. There was an unprecedented rush to have a last glimpse of the martyr. The journey from Lahore to Howrah erupted into a massive emotional stirring of the entire people. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his tribute said: 'Another name has been added to the long and splendid roll of Indian martyrs. Another of India's brave young man has willingly made the ultimate sacrifice at the altar of his motherland. . . . Let us bow our heads and pray for strength to act and to carry on the struggle however long it may be and whatever consequence, till the victory is ours.'⁷⁵ Dr Alam, one of front-ranking national leaders from Lahore in the course of his inspiring speech said:

Das was not only of Bengal but of the whole of India. He had left his soul in the Punjab and although his body was sent to Bengal, his soul was still inspiring the people in this province, the Punjab. His martyrdom helped Punjab and Bengal to attain unity of two great people in India and this unruffled friendship would lead to co-operation of the people of both the provinces to fight shoulder to shoulder for the attainment of their goal — freedom. . . . He claimed that this historic martyrdom helped Punjab to forget the course of Communalism which was fostered by the foreign rulers through their hired agents. We are now wedded to the concept of Indian Nationalism and Common brotherhood. May Das live long.⁷⁶

Presiding over the Punjab Students Conference, Subhas Chandra Bose delivered a soul-stirring speech amidst loud shouts of 'Inquilab Zinda-bad' and 'Down with British Imperialism', from the vastly overflowing student audience in the Bradlaugh Hall in Lahore. 'When we can make great sacrifices for our Motherland,' he said, 'when we can cheerfully lay down our lives for our principles like the great hero Jatin we would bring back the lost glory of our Motherland. The youth movement he started will soon become one of the potential factors in India.'⁷⁷ Indeed, there had been a sudden sweep of revolutionary youth and student movements throughout India. This was the solid advance made by this great event signifying the triumph of spiritual power that a revolutionary imbibes and deliberately cultivates. Bengal was electrified and stirred into revolutionary mass action. Subhas Chandra, along with a batch of dedicated youth led by Kiran Das, defied bans and Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, facing brutal lathi charges by mounted police at Esplanade. Subhas and others were imprisoned for nine months and suffered inhuman torture in Alipore Central Jail. This again roused a wave of indignation and gave the national movement fresh momentum.⁷⁸

Machhuabazar Conspiracy Case

While the whole country from Chittagong to Peshawar was stirred by the patriotic convulsions that were generated by the event of 13 September,

the revolutionaries in Bengal, especially the Advance Group led by Satish Pakrashi, Niranjan Sen, Jagadish Chattopadhyay, Pratul Bhattacharya and Benoy Roy of south Calcutta, were feverishly preparing for a new assault. But due to the leakage of information on 18 December 1929, Sudhanshu Das Gupta was arrested with incriminating materials. This was the signal for a large-scale round-up in which 32 leaders and activists like Satish Pakrashi, Niranjan Sen Gupta, Ramen Biswas, Nayanranjan Das Gupta, Pannalal Das Gupta and Mukul Sen were arrested. They were put on trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from three to fifteen years. This was known as the Machhuabazar Conspiracy Case since their main rendezvous was a room in the huge complex at 85, Machhuabazar Street. The search unearthed huge quantities of materials. Thus ended the second attempt of a section of the Revolt Group, the Machhuabazar Revolt Group.⁷⁹

Attempt on Viceroy's Special Train (23 December 1929)

On the heels of Machhuabazar arrests, on 23 December 1929, a serious attempt was made to explode a mine under the viceroy's special train near Purana Qila, Delhi. This was one of the major targets of the HSRA, then led by Chandrashekhar Azad and Yashpal. Amongst the older comrades, Bishambhar Dayal, Kailashpati, Kanshiram, Lekhram, Vidyabhushan and Dhanwantari were able to evade arrests and assist their leader, Chandrashekhar. Due to a mechanical fault, the blast went off prematurely and the viceroy narrowly escaped death. The police hotly pursued Chandrashekhar, spreading their net in three provinces — UP, Punjab and CP.

After this failure, Chandrashekhar and Yashpal worked on a plan to free the prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, which included Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, Ajoy Ghosh, Shiv Verma, Jaydev Kapur, Bijay K. Sinha and Dr Gaya Prasad. But the plan failed again due to a defect in the bomb itself. Chandrashekhar narrowly escaped arrest and injury.

But the indomitable Azad was again planning a series of actions in Punjab and in UP, reorganizing and activating the moribund units, at a time when the Chattagram youth uprising (18 April 1930), led by Surya Sen gave the signal for widespread revolutionary terrorist actions in Bengal, Bihar and Assam. In the meantime, due to the discovery of bomb factory in Delhi and the arrest of Kailashpati with arms and stores of 10,000 bomb shells, the Delhi Conspiracy Case and the second Lahore Conspiracy Case were instituted, where the absconding Chandrashekhar was declared the ring leader. The police offered a Rs 10,000 reward for information leading to his capture.

Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, after his release, met Chandrashekhar clandestinely in his underground den. In his book, *Bhagat Singh and his Comrades*, he left an interesting account of Chandrashekhar's inner ideological evolution:

He was the same — indomitable and audacious. In between his tremendously active life, he engaged himself in relentless study. His ideas were shaping in maturity day by day. He never hesitated to take the assistance of his English-knowing comrades to explain and clarify many points. He loved the Soviet Union deeply. He was planning to send few of his comrades to the Soviet Union for training in the science of revolution. He was not unmindful of the failure of the present method of spreading patriotic consciousness through the example of self effacement. The great hope of a massive popular upsurge — which Sholapur, Peshawar and Chhattagram had generated was not fulfilled. Not that he lost faith completely in the path of revolutionary terrorism. But he had a feeling that there was something wrong somewhere. He was eager to know from me what Bhagat Singh and other comrades were groping about. He was of opinion that more comrades should devote themselves to work amongst the peasants and workers to make them conscious of the socialist goal. But at the same time he felt strongly that there must be a military wing of the party to carry forward some action oriented programme.⁸⁰

Chandrashekhar was moving fast from one place to another in the remotest corners of UP and Punjab, in the slums of Delhi, meeting comrades, infusing them with hope, courage and revolutionary patience. On 27 February 1931 he made secret appointment at Alfred Park to meet some old comrades. But the police got prior information from one of the old members of his revolutionary fraternity, who virtually betrayed him. The police surrounded the park. As soon as he entered he had a feeling that he was being shadowed. He was fully armed. Very soon an unequal encounter between him and the police took place. He was seriously wounded. While two police officers were severely injured and subsequently died, his body was strafed with innumerable bullets, and the last one, hitting his skull, brought the end to an epic career, which became a legend among people from the remotest terrain of the Himalaya to the boatmen of the Indus, the Ganga and the Jamuna — even of the Narmada and Kaveri. It became a part of a great heritage of courage and self-sacrifice, a model for future generations.⁸¹

Martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev (23 March 1931)

The death of Jatin Das and Chandrashekhar electrified the whole political atmosphere of the country. Immediately, the approvers of Lahore Conspiracy Case retracted their confessions and refused to stand in the witness box. One of the Indian members of the special tribunal, the

Hon'ble Aga Hyder, was expelled because of the adverse comments which he made against the barbarous treatment of the political prisoners and the lathi charges by the police within the court premises.

Government had recourse to extraordinary measures and almost disregarding normal practice, rushed to deliver the final judgement on 7 October 1930. Bhagat Singh, Shivram Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death and seven others including Shiv Verma, Dr Gaya Prasad, Jaydev Kapur and Kishorilal were sentenced to transportation for life. Without giving time to Gandhiji to move for clemency, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were executed in the evening at a quarter to seven on 23 March 1931 in the Lahore Central Jail. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar became the ideal heroes of Indian youth whose memory was invoked at every youth conference and whose example was held as worthy of emulation by all true patriots.⁸²

'Bhagat Singh thus did not become popular', says Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography*, 'because of terrorism, but because he seemed to vindicate for the moment the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai and through him of the nation. He became a symbol; the act was forgotten, the symbol remained and within a few months each town and village of the Punjab and to a less extent in the rest of Northern India, resounded with his name, innumerable songs grew up about him and the popularity that the man achieved was something amazing.'⁸³

With the death of Chandrashekhar Azad and the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, the most eventful years of revolutionary activities in Northern India practically came to an end, though sporadic incidents took place for the next few years in UP, Punjab, Delhi, Bombay, Madras and other places. In Pune, an attempt was made on the life of Sir Ernest Hotson, the Acting Governor, while he was visiting a college. A newly formed revolutionary organization named the Ananda Mandal was very active during this period. Revolutionary students of Khalsa College in Amritsar tried to assassinate the principal of the college for co-operating with the police. In the same year an attempt was made on the life of the Governor of Punjab. Harikishan was tried for this and executed.⁸⁴

Bengal Revolt Groups in Action (1928-34)

While the course of revolutionary terrorism outside Bengal began to subside, the Bengal National Revolutionaries, in December 1928, at the historic Congress session at Calcutta, charted out a different path from the main branch of the federated Jugantar Party led by Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Manoranjan Gupta, Bhupendra K. Datta and Satkari Bandopadhyay, as referred to in the previous section. An attempt to form a co-ordinated centre by Jugantar and Anushilan groups did not

make much headway, and after the Lahore Congress in December 1929, it virtually broke down.

The year 1929 also witnessed the intensification of the economic crisis in Britain and America, which soon enveloped the whole world. India, as an integral part of the colonial economy of the British Empire, could not escape the impact of this crisis. Unemployment, both in urban and rural areas, swelled to frightening proportions. According to a government report, 'Revolutionary propaganda and activities during these years have been sharply increased. They successfully took advantage of this social crisis and generated widespread revolutionary consciousness amongst the educated bhadralok class. . . .⁸⁵ To a considerable extent the unemployment problem is mainly responsible for creating favourable environment, to propagate the ideas of revolution'.⁸⁶

This was how the Government of India viewed the problem. But this was not the whole truth. The sweep of the political awakening throughout the country during the post non-cooperation years and the growing militancy amongst the youth under the impact of national and international events, made the national revolutionaries of Bengal impatient. They were determined to implement 'the death programme' after the disclosure and arrests in Machhuabazar.⁸⁷ In the Calcutta Congress of December 1928, all the major and minor national revolutionary parties and groups reviewed their positions and formulated their respective strategies.

Surya Sen, with his turbulent associates, Ananta Lal Singh, Lokenath Bal, Ganesh Ghosh and Ambika Chakraborty, formed a new group, as stated earlier. The original plan to organize armed uprisings simultaneously in three districts — Mymensingh, Barisal and Chittagong — was given up. With their newly formed Indian Republican Army, the Chittagram branch made the most spectacular and daring raid on the government armoury at Chittagong. It was led by Surya Sen, popularly known as Masterda.⁸⁸

Surya Sen joined the revolutionary movement during the First World War years and spent several years in jail. During the 1920s he joined the Non-Cooperation Movement and, after its failure, was the chief architect of the Chittagram revolutionary unit of Yugantar. He devoted himself to planning for an armed action on the Irish model of the Easter Uprising. A frail man, a teacher in a village school, he very soon attracted the imaginative youth. As a leading organizer of the District Congress Committee, his mobilizing power became incredible. In a swoop by the police in 1926, he was arrested in Sovabazar, Calcutta, along with the Dakshineswar group of revolutionaries led by Professor Jyotish Ghosh, which had close links with the HRA.⁸⁹ After a period of

detention in jails in Ratnagiri and Yeravada, he was released on the eve of Calcutta Congress of 1928 and fast moved into action which culminated in the dramatic Youth Revolt of Chittagong, as it was afterwards called. Their plan was (1) to attack simultaneously and capture the armoury, guard-room and the barracks of the police lines; (2) to attack and seize the magazine and guard-room of the British Auxiliary Force located in Pahartali Polo Ground; (3) to attack and to destroy the telephone office, the telegraph office and to snap wires of both systems of communication; (4) to tamper with railway lines at Dhoom to prevent help which was coming to the authorities from Calcutta and Dacca; (5) to carry out a massacre of Europeans, to strike terror into their hearts so that, instinctively, their first attempt would be to leave Chittagong and not come to the help of the police.⁹⁰

The 'Death Programme' as it was called by the Chattagram revolutionaries had a limited purpose. They did not claim that by their actions they could liberate India from the foreign yoke. They did, however, believe that by carrying out their well-planned programme, they could free Chittagong from the British hold at least for a few days. With the arms seized from the armouries they would then march into the town, capture the Imperial Bank and distribute the money amongst the poor, capture also the gun shop, the only one in the town, free the prisoners from the jail and finally pitch themselves on the Fairy Hill on which the Court building stood. A provisional Revolutionary Government would be declared, with Surya Sen as its president. Afterwards, when the government brought in troops, they would die fighting, thus creating a legend and setting an example before their countrymen to emulate.⁹¹

On the appointed day, 18 April, exactly at 10.30 p.m., the assault was completed.

Surya Sen was indeed formally declared the President of the Provisional Revolutionary Government after the capture of the armouries. The Union Jack was pulled down and the National Flag of India was hoisted instead, amidst slogans of 'Bande Mataram'. The proclamation read by the President expressed determination to extend the revolutionary struggle. 'Chittagong is a tiny part of India. But it is hoped and expected that the development of today will inspire and impel our countrymen to do likewise every where in India and to free our entire motherland from the unholy clutches of the British rulers before long.'⁹²

Surya Sen issued a manifesto in the name of the Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch, in which an appeal was made to the Indian people to support the revolutionaries in their efforts to put an end to British rule in India. The declaration continued:

I, Surya Sen, President, Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch, do

hereby proclaim the existing council of the Indian Republican Army in Chittagong to form itself into a provisional government to carry out the following urgent tasks; one to defend and maintain the victory gained today, second, to extend and intensify the armed struggle for national liberation.⁹³

The first stage of the 'Death Programme' having been completed with seven casualties on the British side and none on the side of the revolutionaries, they had to move out of the town and take their position on the hill-top of Jalalabad under the leadership of Masterda. Orders were given to destroy all the arms and ammunition which could not be used. There was confusion due to an accident in which 17 year old Himanshu was badly burnt. Ananta and Ganesh were detached from the main group. Ambika Chakraborty directed the revolutionary band to proceed towards the nearby hill ranges at Jalalabad. 'At 4 p.m. on April 22, the revolutionaries were spotted.' In the first round of attack, the government troops were in a very disadvantageous position as they had to fight from below. Later, from the top of a higher hill they opened fire from a vantage point. The first martyrs of the Chittagong uprising were twelve boys, almost all in their teens; eleven bodies were found on Jalalabad Hill the next morning, including those of Hari Gopal Baul (Tegra), Tripura Sen, Bidhu Bhattacharya, Naresh Ray, Nirmal Lala, Pulin Bikash Ghosh, Probhash Baul, Jitendra Das Gupta and Sasanka Dutta. Amarendra Nundy, who was sent by Masterda to the town on 21 April for reconnaissance, was spotted under a culvert. He preferred death to surrender in an unequal battle.⁹⁴

On 6 May 1930, after another heroic battle, Swadesh Ray, Rajat Sen, Deba Prasad Gupta and Manoranjan Sen approached their objective — the European club. Unfortunately, the news of their movement in a boat roused police suspicions. They were surrounded by a large armed force. After a sharp exchange of fire, they died, to a man.

After their successful dash through an armed cordon at Feni Railway Station, Ananta Singh and Ganesh Ghosh were escorted to the Calcutta Jugantar den and, from there, to Chandannagar, then a French colony. It was on 2 September 1930, at 2.45 a.m., that Charles Tegart, Police Commissioner of Calcutta, had his men surround the house. After an obstinate resistance, Ganesh Ghosh, Ananda Gupta and others surrendered and faced infinite torture. They were sent to Chittagong Jail to face trial.⁹⁵

The second phase of the struggle was over. Under Masterda's leadership, the CRA then decided to launch guerilla warfare. The adoption of the guerilla method was the distinct contribution of Masterda to the armed struggle for freedom. After a careful study of the geo-political and social condition of the people of Chittagong, he prepared a blueprint for

guerilla warfare in collaboration with Ananta Singh and Ganesh Ghosh who were then lodged in condemned cell in Chittagong Jail.

It is not possible within a brief space to recount in detail the various actions of the youth revolt from 22 April 1930 onwards. But these are some of the outstanding actions: Kalapole (5 May 1930); the surrender of Ananta Singh (28 June 1930) in Lalbazar, skirmishes in Chandannagar on 2 September and the arrest of Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bal and Ananda Gupta, the death of Jibon Ghoshal, the attempt on the life of Craig, DIG of police at Chandpur on December 1, for which Ramakrishna Biswas and Kalipada Chakraborty were tried and hanged. On 12 March 1931, in the village Barang, Tarakeswar Dastidar and Benode Datta confronted a police party led by DIB Inspector Sasanka Bhattacharya and fought through the cordon.⁹⁶ On 22 June, a conspiracy was unearthed by the government to demolish the jail wall and enable leaders like Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh and others to escape. In the same plot, preparations were made to demolish the court where a special tribunal was in session. On 30 August 1931, an oppressive police officer, Asanullah, was murdered by a boy called Haripada Bhattacharya. He had to face the most brutal torture and was then sentenced to transportation for life. The government tried to kindle a communal flare-up without much success.

Masterda decided to spread the activities to the neighbouring districts. Accordingly, Saroj Guha was sent to Dacca. He shot at the District Magistrate Durno on 29 October 1931 in a crowded street of Dacca. Sailesh Ray, a member of the Indian Republican Army (IRA), Chittagong Branch, shot at E.B. Elison, S.P. of Comilla, and successfully evaded arrest. In these actions outside Chittagong, the CRA received help from the revolutionaries of the Jugantar and Anushilan groups.⁹⁷

Earlier, on the night of 13 June 1931, Nirmal Sen, one of the leaders, while in a meeting with the workers, including Pritilata Wadedaar (a young graduate and teacher at the Girls' High School) and Apurba Sen, was surrounded by government forces led by Captain Cameron, at a place called Dhalghat. In the subsequent fight, both Cameron and Nirmal Sen died, along with Apurba. Pritilata was able to escape. On 24 September 1932, Pritilata, under the supreme direction of Masterda, led a group of seven (Pannalal Sen, Shanti Chakraborty, Prafulla Das, Bireswar Ray, Mohendra Chowdhury, Sushil De and Kalikinkar De) in a death-defying attack on the European Club at Pahartali. After fulfilling the mission, Pritilata committed suicide. A small note in the pocket of her blouse, read: 'Women today have taken the firm resolution that they will not remain in the background. I earnestly hope that our sisters would no longer nurse the feeling that they are weak . . . with this hope in my heart, I am proceeding today for self immolation.'⁹⁸

In February 1933, Masterda was arrested at a village called Gairala along with two others. Kalpana escaped narrowly:

As soon as the news of Masterda's arrest reached the villagers around Gairala, the people thronged on both sides of the road presuming that he would be taken to the police station. People could not believe that Masterda could be caught. When they saw Masterda in shackles and showing unmistakable signs of physical torture all over the body, a grimness settled over their faces betraying deep sorrow and determination, with tears rolling down their faces. The military and the police did not fail to notice the reverence and love of the people for Masterda.⁹⁹

After the arrest of Masterda the burden of leadership fell on young Tarakeswar Dastidar. It was on 19 May 1933 that Tarakeswar, along with Kalpana Dutta, Benode Datta, Manindra Datta, Sudhindra Das, Monoranjan Das and Binode Chowdhury, was planning another jail-break and a fresh counter offensive. They spread over in Muslim areas as the Hindus were being closely watched. Sailesh Ray's arrest was another blow. On 19 May 1933, the underground den in Gahira village was cordoned off by the army. The call for surrender was replied to with bullets from Tarakeswar and Kalpana. In the exchange of fire, the owner of the house, Purna Talukdar, and his brother got killed. To avoid further innocent blood being shed, the partisans decided to surrender. At this point a memorable incident took place. A subedar of the Jat Regiment slapped Kalpana Datta on her face. Immediately, she was surrounded by the other soldiers, warning the subedar, 'She is not to be touched,' they said. 'If you raise your hand once again, we will not obey you.' 'It was incredible, my misery faded and my eyes were filled with tears. The sacrifice and the struggle of the Chittagong revolutionaries continuously for four years had not then gone in vain. It had touched the heart of the very soldiers who were deemed heartless mercenaries.'¹⁰⁰

The fight continued with Binode Datta as the new leader. He remained underground till 1941. On 7 January 1934, four teenagers attacked the Europeans assembled at the Cricket ground. Nitya Ranjan Sen and Himanshu Chakraborty were shot dead, and Haren Chakraborty and Krishna Choudhury were executed. That was the last memorable action in the Chattagram Youth Revolt. As a result of a series of trials that followed, Masterda and Tarakeswar Dastidar were hanged on 12 January 1934. Earlier, Ananta Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Lokenath Bal, Ambika Chakraborty, Saroj Guha and others were sentenced to transportation for life. Kalpana was sentenced to life imprisonment. Thus ended one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the revolutionary movement in India.¹⁰¹

Impact of the Chattagram Revolt

The impact of the Chattagram Youth Revolt under Masterda, from the Armoury Raid of 18 April 1930 onwards, was tremendous in Bengal. *Swadhinata*, the Jugantar Party weekly, gave the signal for a forward march to battle, writing a defiant and laudatory editorial under the caption 'Dhannya Chattagram. . . . You have not only saved the self-respect of a disgraced people but also roused the revolutionary consciousness of a nation' ¹⁰² The editorial was written by one of the topmost leaders of Jugantar, Bhupendra Kumar Datta, in the name of Ratneswar Chakraborty who was imprisoned for two years as a result. Very soon, Bhupendra Kumar was also arrested under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. According to an Intelligence Report in May, the leaders of the main Jugantar Party in Calcutta, under Manoranjan Gupta, drew up a programme of widespread terrorism and made fairly large-scale arrangements for the manufacture of bombs. ¹⁰³ It drew up an ambitious programme for major actions including (i) the murder of Europeans in hotels, clubs and cinemas simultaneously in Calcutta and the districts by bombs, (ii) the burning of the aerodrome at Dum-Dum (Calcutta) with petrol, (iii) the cutting of the gas and the electric supply of Calcutta by destroying the gas works and the electric power stations, (iv) the cutting of the petrol supply of Calcutta by destroying the depot at Budge Budge, (v) the disorganization of the tramway service in Calcutta by cutting overhead wires, (vi) the destruction of telegraphic communication between Calcutta and the districts in Bengal and (vii) the destruction of bridges and railway lines, by dynamite and hand grenades. The meeting was convened by Manoranjan Gupta. Amongst important leaders who attended were Satkari Banerjee, Bhupendra Kishore, Rakshit Ray and Rasik Das. ¹⁰⁴

What impact did the Youth Revolt have on the national struggle as a whole and how can one assess the role of the hundreds of heroes and heroines? The impact on the morale of the armed forces has just been exemplified. 'The attitude of the public as a whole towards the police and troops and the action taken under the ordinance was good,' a senior official wrote. 'At the same time they were not generally helpful with information about the absconders . . . we have certainly failed'. (S.N. Roy, Additional Secretary, letter to Secretary of State Home Pol. FN 13/32/1932, P. 285). ¹⁰⁵

The Jugantar Party had strong branches in every district in Bengal. The Bengal Volunteers and Sri Sangha also were ready for action. Accordingly, on 25 August 1930, an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of Charles Tegart, the Commissioner of Police by Anuja Sen and Dinesh Mazumdar. Anuja died in the explosion and Dinesh was caught, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. Later, he escaped and after a

while was again captured in the Cornwallis Street shooting in 1933. He was sent to the gallows on 9 June 1934. Subsequently, in the Calcutta Conspiracy Case, Dr Narayan Ray, Bhupal Bose and Adwait Dutta were tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.¹⁰⁶ On 25 August, Benoy Krishna Bose, a medical student of Sri Sangha killed Mr Lowman, Inspector General of Police, at Dacca. Subsequently, on 8 December 1930 Benoy Badan Gupta and Dinesh Gupta dressed in European clothes dashed into Writers' Building and killed Colonel Simpson, I.G. Prisons and two other officials. After an obstinate resistance, Dinesh Gupta was apprehended in a seriously injured condition. He was later executed (7 July 1931). Badal and Benoy committed suicide.¹⁰⁷

The Midnapore group of Bengal Volunteers had undertaken the programme of assassination during 1931-3. On 31 April, James Peddi, ICS, District Magistrate, was shot dead by two young revolutionaries, Bimal Dasgupta and Jatijiban Ghosh. They escaped. On 30 April 1932, Robert Douglas was murdered and, finally, on 2 September 1933, Bej Burge, Third District Magistrate, was shot dead. Pravanshu Paul escaped. Prodyot K. Bhattacharya and, in the last case, Ramakrishna Ray and Braja Kishore Chakraborty were hanged on 25 October 1933, followed by Nirmal Jiban Ghosh. Besides, the two boys Mriganka Kumar Dutta and Anath Bandhu Panja, were hanged on 27 July 1931. Garlick, Sessions Judge, 24 Parganas, who sentenced Dinesh Gupta to capital punishment was shot dead by one whose identity was made known only after independence as Kanai Bhattacharya. He was deputed by Satkari Bandyopadhyay, Jugantar leader of 24-Parganas, to avenge the death of Dinesh Gupta. Some other important actions were the attempt on Cassels, Divisional Commissioner of Dacca, by one whose identity could never be traced. It was the work of the Jugantar unit of Tangail, in Mymensingh district.¹⁰⁸ On 14 December 1931, Stevens, District Magistrate, Tripura was shot dead by two schoolgirls, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury. They were caught and sentenced to transportation for life. This was the work of the Jugantar unit of Tripura, led by Lalit Burman. In February 1932, during the convocation of Calcutta University, Bina Das shot at the governor. This was an action of the Jugantar group then led by Rasik Das. Bina was jailed for nine years.¹⁰⁹ In 1934, at the Lebong Course at Darjeeling, Governor Anderson was shot by a group of revolutionaries belonging to the B.V. Party. One of them, Bhabani Bhattacharya, was shot dead. Ujjala Mazumdar, Madhu Bandopadhyaya and two others got long term imprisonment.¹¹⁰

The Anushilan Party, from the beginning of 1930 was also making large scale preparations for action. They kept in constant touch with the HSRA's activities in Northern India. In fact, the HSRA was an autonomous extension of Anushilan. In Bengal and Mysore they committed a

few spectacular robberies, e.g. at Hilly and Otty. They also organized all-India leafleting on Swadhin Bharat, along with the jail breaks on 31 July 1934 from Presidency Jail and Buxa Fort. Ultimately, in the interprovincial conspiracy and Titagarh case, Anushilan leaders and workers were put behind the bars with long terms of imprisonment in the Andamans. Parul Mukherjee was convicted to three years' imprisonment along with a few others detained in Bengal.¹¹¹

3. Muslim Participants in National Revolutionary Movement

The role of the Muslim community during this phase of revolutionary upsurge cannot be dealt with fully for want of space. In Uttar Pradesh, Ashfaqullah became a household name along with Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh. He was a member of the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Army. A death sentence was passed on him along with three others in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. Rajan Lahiri, Roshan Singh and Ram Prasad Bismil were associated with him. It was hinted to him that a simple confession involving his comrades would secure his release. But Ashfaqullah scornfully rejected the proposal. The day before his hanging, while meeting his relations and friends at Faizabad Jail, he told his sobbing nephew:

If I am not allowed to observe the last ceremony of the noblest ordeal with all dignity and steadiness then the sanctity of the occasion will be tarnished. Today I feel myself worthy of honour with the hope that a sacred and great responsibility for the liberation of motherland has been entrusted to me. You should feel happy and proud that one of yours is fortunate enough to offer his life. You must remember that the Hindu community has dedicated great souls like Khudiram and Kanailal. To me this is a good fortune that, belonging to the Muslim community, I have acquired the privilege of following the footsteps of those great martyrs.¹¹²

On that day, standing before the execution platform, Ram Prasad and Ashfaqullah, though placed in different jails, chanted the verses of the Gita and Koran and courted the gallows. 'We shall be born again, shall meet again and shall jointly fight once again for the cause of the motherland as comrades-in-arms.' These were the last words of Ram Prasad Bismil.

Amongst others who were associated in a different action was Abdul Monin of the Atmaunnati group, who later on became one of the active members of Communist Party. Abdur Rezaq Khan, who belonged to Independence Party, was closely linked with Abul Kalam Azad. They worked amongst Jugantar, Anushilan and all the revolt groups on the basis of a common minimum programme, i.e. the supply of arms. But both of them were interested in the Bolshevik path of mass revolution.¹¹³

Serajul Haq and Hamidul Haq of Hooghly were long associated with Bhupati Majumdar, one of the leaders of Jugantar Party. They suffered a long term of imprisonment in the Andamans.

Amongst the Muslim youths who were connected with the Jugantar Party the name of Muksuddin Ahmed of Netrakona was well known to the Bengal revolutionaries. Other revolutionary workers were Moulavi Gyashuddin Ahmed and Naziruddin Ahmed, his daughter Rezia Khatun and Abdul Kader of Jamalpur. They were all associated with the Jugantar Party. They suffered imprisonment and braved sufferings for the sake of revolutionary ideals.¹¹⁴

Prominent among those who belonged to the Revolt Group were Wilinewas, Mohamed Ismail, Zahiruddin and Chandmiah of Kishoreganj. Revolutionary workers like Altafali were associated with the Anushilan Party.¹¹⁵

From 1920 onwards, Alimuddin (Master Sahib), another less-known but generous and courageous figure, played a significant part along with Khagen Das, Suren Barchan and Krishna Adhikari in organizing revolutionary units on the outskirts of Dacca City, which later developed into a revolutionary party known as the Bengali Volunteers. He could not continue his work for long. Poverty and starvation ultimately threw him into the jaws of death. His organizing ability and sense of revolutionary discipline were uncommon. He drew many a patriotic Muslim to his side.¹¹⁶ In Bogra, Dr Fazlul Kader Chowdhury spent long years in the Andamans Cellular Jail as a member of Anushilan Samiti in the Hijli Robbery Case.

Next to Mymensingh, the revolutionaries of Chittagong had considerable mass base amongst the Muslims. This was why, in spite of the persistent efforts of the British Government, communal riots could not be instigated after the murder of the oppressive officer Assanullah. When the youths of Hindu families were behind the bars, the doors of Muslim families were open to provide shelter and food for the underground revolutionaries. In the Kalarpol fighting, all the five Hindu fighters received food and care from the adjoining Muslim peasants. A Muslim peasant saved the life of Ambika Chakraborty and offered many of his comrades shelter and food after the Jalalabad fighting. Eradutul-lah, a Muslim youth, gave all protection to the revolutionary leader Ananta Singh and safely escorted him to the den of the Jugantar revolutionaries in Calcutta. Mir Mohammed was one of the most active organizers who sheltered many Chittagong heroes in the midst of unprecedented terror. He was arrested and tortured but refused to divulge any secret information on his activities. He was thrown into Buxar Fort, which shattered his health.

On numerous occasions, Surya Sen, Kalpana Datta, Tarakeswar Das-tidar and Kali Dey of Chittagong had to take shelter in the huts of Muslim peasants of the Chittagong villages. Even in the face of horrible torture and agony, the sad faces of the Muslims did not escape the attention of Surya Sen. Up to this day the tale of those patriotic Muslim peasants can be heard in the countryside of Chittagong, bringing tears to the eyes of each and every revolutionary. 'They have lost many things in life but what they have still retained as a cherished treasure is the simple undaunted love of the Muslim peasantry,' as Kalpana Datta put it in an interview. 'Thousands of common peasantry shed tears in sorrow and anger for having to witness Surya Sen badly assaulted and enchained in front of Patia police station. When Subedar started assaulting Kalpana Datta it drew spontaneous protest from a paramilitary Indian officer. . . . Thousands of Muslim peasants expressed gratitude with silent tears in their eyes.'

Revolutionary masses, both Muslims and Hindus, raised mute protest on every occasion. No amount of malicious propaganda can erase the memory of the undying saga of these Muslim patriots for the cause of freedom of the motherland.¹¹⁷

4. Revolutionaries and the Congress Movement

During the early part of the 20th century, specially from 1906 to 1907, the revolutionary activities of Calcutta Anushilan, later known as the Jugantar Group, were in many cases indirectly supported by the so-called extremist Congress leaders like Bipin Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Ajit Singh, Aurobindo Ghosh, Sister Nivedita, Aswani Kumar Datta and Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chowdhury. After 1907 up to 1918, Congress as an organization, was completely dominated by pro-British conservative elements like Lord S.P. Sinha, who were almost isolated and running counter to the main current of Indian nationalism. From 1916 onward, after the Lucknow Congress, the situation was steadily changing. The Moderate leader, Gokhale, was off the stage. Dr Annie Besant became the President of the Indian National Congress. Her Irish background gave her an added sympathetic understanding of the remnants of the revolutionaries who were in complete disarray after being defeated and persecuted by the government during the war years.

When the revolutionary prisoners were released in batches around 1920, many of the important workers of Jugantar like Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, along with Dr Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyaya and Nalini Kanta Ghosh met Gandhiji.¹¹⁸ They agreed to the proposal of Gandhiji to join the Non-cooperation Movement to be led by him as the supreme leader of the Indian National Congress. The Anushilan leaders had second

thoughts, but some of their leaders, according to Jogesh Chattopadhyay, decided to participate in the movement.¹¹⁹

According to Arun Chandra Guha, one of the leading figures of Jugantar, when the call of the movement came, they decided to leave Calcutta for their respective districts.

Surendra Mohan Ghosh went to Mymensingh to work there with the help of Naresh Chowdhury, Ananda Mazumdar and Mani Choudhury. Bhupati Mazumdar went to Hooghly to organize the Congress and the Hooghly Vidya Mandir along with Amar Chatterjee. Anil Baran Roy and Kamal Krishna Roy went to work in Bankura with Amar Kanan as their base. Monoranjan Gupta and Jiten Datta went to join Aswini Ganguly. Purna Das and Pratap Guha Ray started working at Madaripur. Bupen Dutta went to Khulna, using Satyasram as a base. Tarak Das Banerji went to Nadia. Bipin Behari Ganguly and Hari Kumar Chakraborty took charge of North and South 24 Parganas. Ram Sundar Singh went to Midnapore along with Satish Samanta in Tamruk. He was soon joined by Ajoy Mukherjee. Jiban Chatterji and Jiten Kushari selected their place of work in Munshiganj (Dacca) to work with Nishi Ganguly, the Headmaster of the National School. Surya Sen with his band of workers joined the movement in Chittagong along with Mahim Ch. Das. He became the tower of strength in the Congress Office. Basant Majumdar and his wife Hemapraava along with Lalit Burman took charge of Comilla. Jatin Ray of Bagura, Khagen Das Gupta, Kalipada Bagchi, Jogen Chakraborty, Jamini Goswamy, Loken Sen, Suresh Chatterjee, Satyapriya Banerji and many others spread over in different districts of North Bengal and made the Congress organisation as their centres of operation.¹²⁰

In 1922, after the suspension of non-cooperation, a session of the Bengal Provincial Political Conference was held at Chittagong under the Presidentship of Shrimati Basanti Devi. Here the leaders of Jugantar met secretly to review the situation against the background of Gandhiji calling off the movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, and decided to reorganize the secret wing of the party and to start collecting firearms for future action and insurrection. That would mean of course another phase of the self-immolation programme. It may be mentioned that Surya Sen, who later on organized and masterminded the uprising in 1930 was an important participant in this discussion.

According to a DIB Report, 'they [terrorists] took advantage of the non-violent non-cooperation movement to organize their scattered forces. They joined in the movement with that very object and many of them became organisers of bodies of volunteers for NCO activities and recruited many of the volunteers as "Terrorists".'¹²¹ In 1922 'terrorists' were represented in the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and All India Congress Committee. They succeeded in capturing a large number

of seats on the Executive Committees of the various District Congress Organizations and very soon were represented in the Bengal Congress Executive Committee and in the All India Congress Committee. They made several attempts to commit the Bengal Congress Committee to a violent programme.¹²² The Intelligence report further referred to Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das, Deshapriya Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and Subhas Chandra Bose, as a few outstanding leaders who had been deeply involved in different activities of the parties like Jugantar, Anushilan and the Atmaunnati Group. 'At the Serajgange Congress Conference, 1924, Mr C.R. Das, with the help of his terrorist supporters succeeded in passing his Hindu-Muslim pact resolution and then in return for their support put through the infamous resolution eulogizing Gopi Mohan Saha, the assassin's example.' In this year, 29 ex-detenués or political ex-convicts were office bearers of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and 21 revolutionaries or sympathizers were elected to AICC.¹²³

In UP, Jaychandra Vidyalkar and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi were among the most respected Congress leaders, who attracted many youths in the revolutionary Hindusthan Socialist Republican Army.¹²⁴ It produced martyrs like Bhagat Singh, Ramprasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla, Chandrashekhar Azad and many outstanding revolutionaries like Jogesh Chatterjee, Bijay Kr Sinha, Rajkumar Sinha and Manmath Gupta. Similarly the South and Central Calcutta Congress Committees became the main bases of the HSRA which produced martyr Jatin Das. Biswanath Mukherjee was one of the key figures in this group in the South Calcutta Congress Committee. Similarly, the Central Calcutta Congress was dominated by Bipin Ganguly's ardent lieutenants, Deven De and Kali Mukherjee. In the Calcutta Congress (1928) the 'Bengal Terrorist Parties' formed the 'Independence League for India' and determined to capture the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, which they largely succeeded in doing by the end of the year. They formed a Congress Volunteer Corps, called the Bengal Volunteers, which they wanted to convert into their fighting force when they called for an armed uprising.¹²⁵

By and large, since the Calcutta Congress (1928), rivalry between Anushilan and Jugantar was accentuated and both the parties regrouped themselves behind the popular Congress leaders, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and Subhas Chandra Bose respectively. At the Calcutta Congress in 1928, Subhas Chandra Bose moved an amendment to Gandhiji's resolution on dominion status. The amendment was to the effect that there could be no freedom as long as the British connection remained and that the goal of the Congress should be complete independence. The amendment was, however, lost by a narrow margin of

1,350 votes to 973. The revolutionaries had strived hard to get it passed. They were, however, successful at the Lahore Congress in 1929, which proved to be largely 'terrorist' in sympathy.¹²⁶

In 1930, 'Terrorists exploited the Civil Disobedience Movement and opened terrorist campaigns.' They took an active part in the movement and many of them were imprisoned for picketing. The author himself joined the movement as member of the Jugantar Group of the Mymensingh Unit. Leaders of the Jugantar Party like Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Nagendra Shekhar Chakraborty, Syamananda Sen, Jagadish Majumdar, Satish Chakraborty, Kulendra Roy (Mejda), Aswini Kr Ganguly, Kiron Mukherjee, Purna Das and Anil Ray, played a very impressive role in the national movement led by the BPCC from 1928 to 1932. Anushilan leaders, Maharaj Trailakya Chakraborty, Pratul Ganguly and Madan Bhowmick, occupied important positions in the BPCC during 1928-30. Madan Bhowmick had been the Secretary of the Dacca District Congress Committee during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. There were of course the rival Civil Disobedience Committee and Council in Bengal under Subhas Chandra Bose and Sengupta respectively.¹²⁷

By August 1930, however, the revolutionaries decided to again plunge into violent action. This phase of activities gradually subsided and a new phase began after 1936. Most of the revolutionary workers, returning from detention in jails and from the Andamans joined the mass organizations led by the Communist or Socialist parties. Many erstwhile revolutionary parties like Jugantar openly declared their merger with the Congress.¹²⁸ But the Indian National Congress became the universal platform for all those who, after many a twist and turn, concluded that the battle against British Imperialism was the primary one.

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25. 'Terrorism in India', Director of Intelligence, GOI, p. 21.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 22; Ganga Narayan Chanda, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
27. *Joint Committee Report on Indian Constitutional Reform*, Appendix, p. 326; 'Terrorism in India', p. 28; Ganesh Ghosh, *Surya Sen*, p. 16; G.N. Chanda, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
28. 'Terrorism in India', *op. cit.*, p. 14
29. Ananta Singh, *Chattagram Juba Vidroha*, Vidyoday Publishers, Calcutta, p. 227.
30. 'Terrorism in India', *op. cit.*, p. 19.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 23; Ananta Singh, *Agnigarbha Chattagram*, p. 195.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 24; Interview with B.K. Sinha; Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti Katha*, p. 501.
34. Interview with Ananta Singh on 1-12-78; Ananta Singh, *Chattagram Yuba Vidroha*, Vidyoday, Calcutta, p. 228; Satish Pakrashi, *Agnidiner Katha*, p. 138; interview with Pratul Bhattacharya on 11 February 1972; Brojen Das,

Anushilan Party & Biplab Prayash, Biplabi Bangla Karyalaya, Calcutta, p. 2.

35. Nalini Das. *Dwipantarar Kahini — Renowned Revolutionary*, 30-4.
36. Satish Pakrashi, op. cit., p. 137; 'Terrorism in India', op. cit., p. 18.
37. Ananta Singh, *Jubo Vidroha*, pp. 222-39.
38. *Agnigarbha Chattagram*.
39. 'Terrorism in India', op. cit., p. 25, statement of Panchanan Chakraborty.
40. Satish Pakrashi, op. cit., p. 458.
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43. Satish Pakrashi, op. cit., p. 461.
44. Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit., pp. 479-80, 483; Narayan Bando-padhyay, *Biplaber Sandhaney*, Calcutta, p. 64 (In search of revolution); 'Terrorism in India', p. 34; Bhupendra Kr Dutta, *Biplaber Padachinnha*, Calcutta, 2nd ed., pp. 266-7.
45. Interview with Pramatha Bhowmick and Abdur Rezzaque Khan on 9 July 1968; Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Sabar Alakhya*.
46. Ibid.
47. Satyen Mazumdar, op. cit., pp. 131-8.
48. 'Terrorism in India'; Satish Pakrashi, op. cit.
49. Satish Pakrashi, op. cit.
50. Ibid.
51. Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, op. cit.; Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, op. cit.
52. Nalini Das, op. cit.; statement by Panchanan Chakraborty; interview with Abdur Rezzaque Khan.
53. 'Terrorism in India (1917-36)', p. 17 (DIB: GOI 1932).
54. Kalicharan Ghosh (one of the leading figures of Jugantar), *Roll of Honour*, p. 369.
55. 'Terrorism in India', p. 21.
56. Rearoy: Brief note on the alliance on S.S.P. IVB of Congress with Terrorism in Bengal, Darjeeling, May 4, 1932, Home Pol. File No. 4-21, 1932.
57. 'Terrorism in India', pp. 18-22.
58. Ibid., p. 12.
59. Jadugopal, pp. 435-6.
60. Writer's own experience in 1928.
61. Manmath Nath Gupta: *They Lived Dangerously*, p. 141.
62. Ibid., pp. 34-5; Jogesh Ch. Chattopadhyay: *In Quest of Freedom*, p. 141; Shiv Verma on Azad, *Mrityuhin*, Calcutta, p. 46.
63. Manmath Nath Gupta, op. cit., p. 388.
64. Ibid., pp. 99-101.
65. Kalicharan Ghosh, *Roll of Honour*, p. 388.
66. Writer's own experience in 1929; Jadugopal, p. 436.
67. 'Terrorism in India', p. 75.
68. Ibid., p. 76.
- 68a. Ibid., p. 21.
69. Manmath Nath Gupta; *Bhagat Singh and His Times*, Delhi, 1977, p. 127.

70. Ajoy K. Ghosh, *Bhagat Singh and His Comrades*, p. 15; Home Pol. File No. 138 and K.W. 1930, pp. 40-1; *The Revolutionary*, published by HRA, 1925.
71. 'Terrorism in India', p. 76; Shiv Verma, *Mrityuhin*, Biplabi Niketan, Calcutta, pp. 116-24.
72. Ajoy K. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 18.
73. Interview with Kiran Das (younger brother of Jatin Das) and Bijay K. Sinha, his co-accused.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Kiran Das, *Profile of a Martyr*, p. 66.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
78. Writer's own experience.
79. Nalini Das, op. cit.; Satish Pakrashi, op. cit.; Jagdish Chatterjee interviewed; 'Terrorism in India', p. 22.
80. Ajoy K. Ghosh, op. cit., pp. 25-6.
81. Shiv Verma, *Mrityuhin on Azad*, pp. 116-24; Manmath Gupta, op. cit.
82. Kiran Das interviewed; Satyen Mazumdar, *In Search of Revolutionary Ideology*, pp. 143, 153.
83. Jawaharlal Nehru: *Autobiography*.
84. 'Terrorism in India', pp. 151-2.
85. *Joint Committee Report on Indian Constitutional Reform 1933-34*, Vol. II; 'Memorandum on Terrorism', p. 336.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
87. Ananta Singh, *Yuba Bidroha*, p. 140.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 110; Ganesh Ghosh, *Surya Sen*, p. 80, Calcutta University Publication.
89. 'Terrorism in India', p. 18; Ananta Singh, op. cit., p. 170.
90. Chittagong Armoury Raid trial papers, Home Pol. File No. 13/32/32; Ananta Singh, op. cit., p. 180.
91. Kalpana Joshi (Datta), *Chittagong Uprising and the Role of the Muslims*, PPH, New Delhi, pp. 50-1.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
94. Statement of Kali De, one of the participants in the youth uprising; Ganesh Ghosh interviewed.
95. Ananda Gupta, *Chattagram Uprising*, p. 112; Home Pol. File No. 13/32/32.
96. Benode Datta, one of leading figures, interviewed.
97. Kalpana Joshi, op. cit., p. 64.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 69; Benode Datta, Kali De, interviewed.
100. Kalpana Datta interviewed.
101. Judgement File No. 42/7/33, Home Political on Second Supplementary Case.
102. David Petrie, Minute on the present situation considered in relation to the revolutionary crime and terrorism. Simla, 19 June 1929-30, Home Pol. F. No. 133 — 1930.
103. Note by Secretary of State, p. 331; 'Terrorism in India', DIB, GOI, pp. 35-7.

104. Ibid., pp. 35-6.
105. Manoranjan Gupta (one of the leading figures of Jugantar), *Autobiography*, Calcutta, p. 43.
106. Additional Secretary, letter to Secretary of State, Home Pol. F. No. 13/32/32, p. 285.
107. 'Terrorism in India', DIB, GOI, p. 37.
108. Ibid., pp. 37-40.
109. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
110. Ibid., p. 47.
111. Ibid., p. 58.
112. 'Terrorism in India', DIB, GOI, pp. 52, 55, 56, 63.
113. Kalicharan Ghosh, *Roll of Honour*, p. 236; Shiv Verma, 'Chandra Shekhar Azad' in *Mrityumjin* (Bengali).
114. Home Pol. File 196-99.
115. The writer was a co-worker of Nasiruddin and Gyasuddin Ahmed belonging to the Jugantar Party of Mymensingh.
116. The writer was jail-mate in 1931 of the mentioned personalities.
117. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray (a leader of B.V. Revolt Group in Bengal), *Sabir Alakhey*, p. 147.
118. Interview with Kalpana (Datta) Joshi on the role of Muslims of Chittagong; Emerson, Divisional Commissioner's letter to Home Secretary, Govt. of Bengal about the potential strength of terrorists in Chittagong. Being a Muslim majority district, it was wondered how, without the passive and active connivance of the local Muslim, these important absconders could have got their sustenance. H.P.F. No. 242.
119. A.C. Guha, *Aurobindo and Jugantar*, Calcutta, p. 45.
120. Tarapada Lahiry, *History of Anushilan Party*, Vol. I; Satyendra Nath Mazumdar, op. cit., p. 105; A.C. Guha, op. cit., p. 54.
121. Rearoy, Notes on Congress Terrorists, Home Pol. F. No. 4/21/1932.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Interview with Jogesh Chattopadhyaya and Bijay Kumar Sinha.
125. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Bharati Shashastra Biplabu Itihash*, p. 185.
126. Rearoy, op. cit.
127. The writer was himself an active worker in the BPCC Office at 116 Bowbazar Street from February to April 1930.
128. Statement of Dr Jadugopal Mukhopadhyaya in 1938 declaring dissolution of the Jugantar Party.

APPENDIX A

Where Congress Stands

Speech by Mahatma Gandhi at Federal Structure Committee, London, 15 September 1931, Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session); Proceedings of Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee, Vol. I, pp. 41-7; *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XLVIII, pp. 13-20.

London
September 15, 1931

Lord Chancellor, Your Highnesses and Friends,

I must confess at the outset that I am not a little embarrassed in having to state before you the position of the Indian National Congress. I would like to say that I have come to London to attend this Committee, as also the Round Table Conference when the proper time comes, absolutely in the spirit of co-operation, and to strive to my utmost to find points of agreement. I would like also to give this assurance to His Majesty's Government that at no stage is it, or will it be, my desire to embarrass authority and I would like to give the same assurance to my colleagues here, that, however much we may differ about our view-points, I shall not obstruct them in any shape or form. My position, therefore, here depends entirely upon your goodwill, as also the goodwill of His Majesty's Government. If at any time I found that I could not be of any useful service to the Conference, I would not hesitate to withdraw myself from it. I can also say to those who are responsible for the management of this Committee and the Conference that they have only to give a sign and I should have no hesitation in withdrawing.

I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself. There is also a limitation under which I shall be working. I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress. And it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great. The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organization we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life, during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means — national. It represents no particu-

lar community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain: Allan Octavius Hume we knew as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsis, Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji, whom all India delighted to recognize as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians — I might say all the religions, sects, creeds — represented upon it more or less fully. The late Badruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans as Presidents of the Congress, and Parsis undoubtedly. I can recall at least one Indian Christian at the present moment, W.C. Bonnerji. Kalicharen Bannerji, than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian, was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr K.T. Paul. Although — I do not know, but so far as I know — he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full. As you know, the late Maulana Mohammed Ali, whose presence also we miss today, was a President of the Congress, and at present we have four Mussalmans as members of the Working Committee, which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our presidents: Dr Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs Sarojini Naidu followed; we have her as a member of the Working Committee also. And so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

The Congress has, from its very commencement, taken up the cause of the so-called untouchables. There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade dedicated his energies, among his many other activities. Headed by him you will find, in the programme of the Social Conference, reform in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920, the Congress took a large step and brought in the question of the removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, making it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity — thereby meaning unity amongst all the classes — to be indispensable for the attainment of swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom. The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains the same today; and so you will see the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term.

If Your Highnesses will permit me to say so, in the very early stages the Congress took up your cause also. Let me remind this Committee

that it was the Grand Old Man of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore; and these two great Houses, I venture in all humility to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the Congress. Even up to now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs.

I hope, therefore, that this brief introduction that I thought fit to give will serve to enable the Committee, and those who are at all interested in the claims of the Congress, to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim but I venture to submit that, if you were to examine the history of the Congress, you would find that it has more often succeeded, and progressively succeeded than failed. Above all, the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 700,000 villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve the interests of these dumb millions; and so you do find now and again apparently a clash between several interests. But, if there is a genuine real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions. It is, therefore, essentially a peasant organization, and it is becoming so progressively. You will — even the Indian members of the Committee — perhaps be astonished to find that today the Congress, through its organization, the All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages, and these women are possibly 50 per cent Mussalman women. Thousands of them belong to the so-called untouchable class. We have thus, in this constructive manner, penetrated these villages, and effort is being made to cover every one of the 700,000 villages. It is a superhuman task; but if human effort can do so, you will presently find the Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning-wheel.

That being the representative character of the Congress, you will not be astonished when I read to you the Congress mandate. I hope that it may not jar upon you. You may consider that the Congress is making a claim which is wholly untenable. Such as it is, I am here to put forth that claim on behalf of the Congress in the gentlest manner possible, but also in the firmest manner possible. I have come here to prosecute that claim with all the faith and energy that I can command. If you can convince me to the contrary and show that the claim is inimical to the interests of these dumb millions, I shall revise my opinion. I am open to conviction,

but even so I should have to ask my principals to consent to that revision before I could usefully act as the agent of the Congress.

At this stage I propose to read to you this mandate so that you can understand clearly the limitations imposed upon me. This was a resolution passed at the Karachi Congress:

This Congress, having considered the Provisional Settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it, and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of *purna swaraj*, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining otherwise open to the Congress to be represented at any Conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress Delegation will work for this goal; and in particular, so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England and the right to either party to end the partnership at will: provided, however, that the Congress Delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India.

Then follows the appointment.

I have in the light of this mandate endeavoured, as carefully as I was capable, to study the provisional conclusions arrived at by the several Sub-committees appointed by the Round Table Conference. I have also carefully studied the Prime Minister's statement giving the considered policy of His Majesty's Government. I speak as subject to correction; but, so far as I have been able to understand this document, it falls far short of what is aimed at and claimed by the Congress. True, I have the liberty to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India, but they have all to be consistent with the fundamentals stated in this mandate.

I remind myself at this stage of the terms of what is to me a sacred settlement — the settlement arrived at at Delhi between the Government of India and the Congress. In that settlement the Congress has accepted the principle of federation, the principle that there should be responsibility at the Centre, and has accepted also the principle that there should be safeguards in so far as they may be necessary in the interests of India.

There was one phrase used yesterday. I forget by which delegate, but it struck me very forcibly. He said, 'We do not want a mere political constitution.' I do not know that he gave that expression the same meaning that it immediately bore to me; but I immediately said to myself, this phrase has given me a good expression. It is true the

Congress will not be — and, personally speaking, I myself would never be — satisfied with a mere political constitution, which to read would seem to give India all it can possibly politically desire, but in reality would give her nothing. If we are intent upon complete independence, it is not from any sense of arrogance; it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connection with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, you find in this mandate itself that the Congress contemplates a partnership — the Congress contemplates a connection with the British people — but that connection to be such as can exist between two absolute equals. Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject; I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject. But I have aspired — I still aspire — to be a citizen, not of the Empire, but in a Commonwealth; in a partnership if possible — if God wills it, an indissoluble partnership — but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence you find here that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever the connection, to dissolve the partnership. It has got to be necessarily, therefore, of mutual benefit.

May I say — it may be irrelevant to the consideration, but not irrelevant to me — that, as I have said elsewhere, I can quite understand the responsible British statesmen today being wholly engrossed in domestic affairs, in trying to make two ends meet. We could not expect them to do anything less; and I wondered, even as I was sailing towards London, whether we in the Committee at the present moment would not be a drag upon the British Ministers — whether we would not be interlopers. And yet I said to myself: It is possible that we might not be interlopers; it is possible that the British Ministers themselves might consider the proceedings of the Round Table Conference to be of primary importance even in terms of their domestic affairs.

India, yes, can be held by the sword! I do not for one moment doubt the ability of Britain to hold India under subjection through the sword. But what will conduce to the prosperity of Great Britain, the economic freedom of Great Britain — an enslaved but rebellious India, or an India an esteemed partner with Britain to share her sorrows to take part side by side with Britain in her misfortunes? Yes! if need be, but at her own will, to fight side by side with Britain — not for the exploitation of a single race or a single human being on earth, but it may be conceivably for the good of the whole world! If I want freedom for my country, believe me, if I can possibly help it, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which counts one-fifth of the human race, may exploit any other race upon earth or any single individual. If I want that freedom for my country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if

I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every other race, weak or strong, to the same freedom.

And so I said to myself whilst I was nearing the shores of your beautiful island, per chance it might be possible for me to convince the British Ministers that India as a valuable partner, not held by force but the silken cord of love — an India of that character might conceivably be of real assistance to you in balancing your budget, not for one occasion but for many years. What cannot two nations do — one a handful, but brave, with a record for bravery perhaps unequalled, a nation noted for having fought slavery, a nation that has at least claimed times without number to protect the weak — and another a very ancient nation, counted in millions, with a glorious and ancient past, representing at the present moment two great cultures, the Islamic and Hindu cultures; if you will, also containing not a small but a very large number of Christian population; and certainly absorbing the whole of the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers almost beneath contempt, but in philanthropy and enterprise almost unequalled and certainly unsurpassed. We have got all these cultures concentrated in India. And supposing that God fires both Hindus and Mussalmans represented here with a proper spirit, so that they close ranks and come to an honourable understanding — take that nation and this nation together, and I again ask myself and ask you whether, with an India free, completely independent as Great Britain is, whether an honourable partnership between these two cannot be mutually beneficial, even in terms of the domestic affairs of this great nation. And so, in that dreamy hope, I have approached the British Isles, and I shall still cherish that dream.

And when I have said this perhaps I have said all; and you will be able to dot the i's and to cross the t's, not expecting me to fill in all the details, and tell you what I mean by control over the Army, what I mean by control over external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, or even the financial transactions which a friend yesterday considered to be sacrosanct. I do not take that view. If there is a stock-taking between incoming and outgoing partners, their transactions are subject to audit and adjustment; and the Congress will not be guilty of any dishonourable conduct or crime in saying that the nation should understand what it is to take over and what it should not take over. This audit, this scrutiny, is asked for not merely in the interests of India; it is asked for in the interests of both. I am positive that the British people do not want to saddle upon India a single burden which it should not legitimately bear; and I am here to declare, on behalf of the Congress, that the Congress will never think of repudiating a single claim or a burden that it should justly discharge. If we are to live as an honourable nation worthy of

commanding credit from the whole world, we will pay every farthing of legitimate debt with our blood.

I do not think that I should take you any further through the clauses of this mandate and analyse for you the meaning of these clauses as Congressmen give them. If it is God's will that I should continue to take part in these deliberations, as the deliberations proceed, I shall be able to explain the implications of these clauses. As the deliberations proceed, I would have my say in connection with the safeguards also. But I think I have said quite enough in having, with some elaboration and with your generous indulgence, Lord Chancellor, taken the time of this meeting. I had not intended really to take that time, but I felt that I could not possibly do justice to the cause that I have come to expound to you, the Committee, and to the British nation of which we, the Indian Delegates, are at present the guests, if I did not give you out of the whole of my heart my cherished wish even at this time. I would love to go away from the shores of the British Isles with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India. I cannot do anything more than say that it will be my fervent prayer, during all the days that I live in your midst, that this consummation may be reached.

I thank you, Lord Chancellor, for the courtesy that you have extended to me in not stopping me, although I have taken close upon forty-five minutes. I was not entitled to all that indulgence, and I thank you once more.

APPENDIX B

Whither India?

Pamphlet by Jawaharlal Nehru, originally published as a series of articles in the Indian press on 9, 10 and 11 October 1933.

The newcomer from prison has long been cut off from the rough and tumble of life and politics, and yet he has a certain advantage on his side. He can take a more detached view; he is not so much wrapped up in the controversies of the moment; he may be able to stress principles when others argue about petty tactics; he may actually see the realities under the surface of ever-changing phenomena.

Many people ask: What are we to do? The mouths of most of those who could answer, or help in framing the answer, are shut either in prison or outside. But free advice, often accompanied by threats, comes to us in an unending stream from those who rule us and their faithful followers in this land. They warn us and threaten us and cajole us and offer us good advice by turns, anxious to influence us and yet uncertain of the right approach to us. Let us leave them and their advice for the moment; such gifts, even when free, are apt to be suspect.

Right action cannot come out of nothing; it must be preceded by thought. Thought which is not meant to lead to action has been called on abortion; action which is not based on thought is chaos and confusion. It is worthwhile therefore to clear our minds of all the tangled webs that may have grown there, to forget for the moment the immediate problems before us, the difficult knots we have to unravel, the day to day worries, and go back a little to basic facts and principles. What exactly do we want? And why do we want it?

I write with diffidence because I have for long been cut off from the nationalist press, but I have a feeling that little attention is paid to these basic facts and principles. The censorship may be partly to blame for this, or the fear of it, but even that, I think, is not a sufficient explanation. Attention seems to be concentrated on the most trivial of issues and vital matters are ignored. Should Gandhiji see the viceroy or not? Will Stanley Baldwin triumph over Winston Churchill? What has Sir Samuel Hoare said or not said? Are we going to get that wonderful thing called 'Central Responsibility' or not? Hardly a reference to what we are driving at, hardly a thought of real issues.

Never in the long range of history has the world been in such a state of flux as it is today. Never has there been so much anxious questioning, so much doubt and bewilderment, so much examining of old institutions,

existing ills and suggested remedies. There is a continuous process of change and revolution going on all over the world, and everywhere anxious statesmen are almost at their wits' end and grope about in the dark. It is obvious that we are a part of this great world problem and must be affected by world events. And yet, judging from the attention paid to these events in India, one would not think so. Major events are recorded in the news columns of papers but little attempt is made to see behind and beneath them, to understand the forces that are shaking and reforming the world before our eyes, to comprehend the essential nature of social, economic and political reality. History, whether past or present, becomes just a magic show with little rhyme or reason, and with no lesson for us which might guide our future path. On the gaily-decked official stage of India or England phantom figures come and go, posing for a while as great statesmen; Round Tablers flit about like pale shadows of those who created them, engaged in pitiful and interminable talk which interests few and affects an even smaller number. Their main concern is how to save the vested interests of various classes or groups; their main diversion, apart from feasting, is self-praise. Others, blissfully ignorant of all that has happened in the last half a century, still talk the jargon of the Victorian Age and are surprised and resentful that nobody listens to them. Even the nasmyth hammer of war and revolution and world change has failed to produce the slightest dent on their remarkably hard heads. Yet others hide vested interests under cover of communalism or even nationalism. And then there is the vague but passionate nationalism of many who find present conditions intolerable and hunger for national freedom without clearly realising what form that freedom will take. And there are also here, as in many other countries, the usual accompaniments of a growing nationalism — an idealism, a mysticism, a feeling of exaltation, a belief in the mission of one's country, and something of the nature of religious revivalism. Essentially all these are middle class phenomena.

Our politics must either be those of magic or of science. The former of course requires no argument or logic; the latter is in theory at least entirely based on clarity of thought and reasoning and has no room for vague idealistic or religious or sentimental processes which confuse and befog the mind. Personally, I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion and I can only consider the question on scientific grounds.

What then are we driving at? Freedom? Swaraj? Independence? Dominion Status? Words which may mean much or little or nothing at all. Egypt is 'independent' and yet, as everybody knows, it is at present little better than an Indian state, an autocracy imposed upon an unwilling people and propped up by the British. Economically, Egypt is a

colony of some of the European imperialist Powers, notably the British. Ever since the World War there has been continuous conflict between Egyptian nationalism and the ruling authorities and this continues to-day. So in spite of a so-called 'independence' Egypt is very far from even national freedom.

Again, whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many a conflicting element? There is the feudal India of the princes, the India of the big zamindars, or small zamindars, of the professional classes, of the agriculturists, of the industrialists, of the bankers, of the lower middle class, of the workers. There are the interests of foreign capital and those of home capital, of foreign services and home services. The nationalist answer is to prefer home interests to foreign interests but beyond that it does not go. It tries to avoid disturbing the class divisions or the social *status quo*. It imagines that the various interests will somehow be accommodated when the country is free. Being essentially a middle class movement, nationalism works chiefly in the interests of that class. It is obvious that there are serious conflicts between various interests in a country, and every law, every policy which is good for one interest may be harmful for another. What is good for the Indian prince may be thoroughly bad for the people of his state, what is profitable for the zamindar may ruin many of his tenants, what is demanded by foreign capital may crush the rising industries of the country.

Nothing is more absurd than to imagine that all the interests in the nation can be fitted in without injury to any. At every step some have to be sacrificed for others. A currency policy may be good for creditors or debtors, not for both at the same time. Inflation, resulting in a reduction or even wiping off of debts, will be welcomed by all debtors and by industry as a rule, but cursed by bankers and those who have fixed incomes. Early in the nineteenth century, England deliberately sacrificed her agriculture for her rising industry. A few years ago, in 1923, by insisting on keeping the value of the pound sterling at par she sacrificed, to some extent, her industry to her banking and financial system, and faced industrial troubles and a huge general strike.

Any number of such instances can be given; they deal with the rival claims of different groups of the possessing classes. A more vital conflict of interest arises between these possessing classes as a whole and the others; between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. All this is obvious enough, but every effort is made to confuse the real issue by the holders of power, whether political or economic. The British Government is continually declaring before high heaven that they are trustees for our masses and India and England have common interests and can march hand in hand to a common destiny. Few people are taken in by this

because nationalism makes us realize the inherent conflict between the two national interests. But nationalism does not make us realize the equally inherent and fundamental conflict between economic interests within the nation. There is an attempt to cover this up and avoid it on the ground that the national issue must be settled first. Appeals are issued for unity between different classes and groups to face the common national foe, and those who point out the inherent conflict between landlord and tenant, or capitalist and wage labourer are criticized.

We may take it that the average person does not like conflict and continuous tension; he prefers peace and quiet, and is even prepared to sacrifice much for it. But the ostrich-like policy of refusing to see a conflict and a disorder which not only exist but are eating into society's vitals, to blind oneself to reality, will not end the conflict and the disorder or suddenly change reality into unreality; for a politician or a man of action such a policy can only end in disaster. It is therefore essential that we keep this in mind and fashion our idea of freedom accordingly. We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later: for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and the workers first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially whom do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? To say that we shall not answer that question now is itself an answer and taking of sides, for it means that we stand by the existing order, the *status quo*.

The form of government is after all a means to an end; even freedom itself is a means, the end being human well-being, human growth, the end of poverty and disease and suffering and the opportunity for everyone to live the 'good life', physically and mentally. What the 'good life' is, is a matter we cannot go into here, but most people will agree that freedom is essential to it — national freedom so far as the nation is concerned, personal freedom so far as the individual is concerned. For every restriction and inhibition stops growth and development and produces, apart from economic disorders, complexes and perversions in the nation and individual. So freedom is necessary. Equally necessary is the will and the capacity for co-operation. Modern life grows so complex, there is so much interdependence, that co-operation is the very breath that keeps it functioning.

The long course of history shows us a succession of different forms of government and changing economic forms of production and organization. The two fit in and shape and influence each other. When economic change goes ahead too fast and the forms of government remain more or less static, a hiatus occurs, which is usually bridged over by a sudden

change called revolution. The tremendous importance of economic events in shaping history and forms of government is almost universally admitted now.

We are often told that there is a world of difference between the East and the West. The West is said to be materialistic, the East spiritual, religious etc. What exactly the East signifies is seldom indicated, for the East includes the Bedouins of the Arabian deserts, the Hindus of India, the nomads of the Siberian steppes, the pastoral tribes of Mongolia, the typically irreligious Confucians of China, and the Samurai of Japan. There are tremendous national and cultural differences between the different countries of Asia as well as of Europe; but there is no such thing as East and West except in the minds of those who wish to make this an excuse for imperialist domination, or those who have inherited such myths and fictions from a confused metaphysical past. Differences there are but they are chiefly due to different stages of economic growth.

We see, in north-western Europe, autocracy and feudalism giving place to the present capitalist order involving competition and large scale production. The old small holdings disappear; the feudal checks on the serfs and cultivators go, and these agriculturists are also deprived of the little land they had. Large numbers of landless people are thrown out of employment and they have no land to fall back upon. A landless, propertyless proletariat is thus created. At the same time the checks and the controlled prices of the limited market of feudal times disappear, and the open market appears. Ultimately this leads to the world market, the characteristic feature of capitalism.

Capitalism builds up on the basis of the landless proletariat, which could be employed as wage labourers in the factories and the open market, where the machine-made goods could be sold. It grows rapidly and spreads all over the world. In the producing countries it was an active and living capitalism; in the colonial and consuming countries it was just a passive consumption of the goods made by machine industry in the West. North-western Europe, and a little later, North America, exploit the resources of the world; they exploit Asia, Africa, East Europe and South America. They add vastly to the wealth of the world but this wealth is largely concentrated in a few nations and a few hands.

In this growth of capitalism, dominion over India was of vital importance to England. India's gold, in the early stages, helped in the further industrialization of England. And then India became a great producer of raw material to feed the factories of England and a huge market to consume the goods made in these factories. England, in her passionate desire to accumulate wealth, sacrificed her agriculture to her industry. England became almost a kind of vast city and India the rural area attached to her.

The concentration of wealth in fewer hands went on. But the exploitation of India and other countries brought so much wealth to England that some of it trickled down to the working class and their standards of living rose. Working class agitations were controlled and soothed by concessions from the capitalist owners, which they could well afford from the profits of imperialist exploitation. Wages rose; hours of work went down; there were insurance and other welfare schemes for the workers. A general prosperity in England took the edge off working class discontent.

In India, passive industrialization meant an ever growing burden on land. She became just a consumer of foreign machine-made goods. Her own cottage industries were partly destroyed forcibly, and partly by economic forces, and nothing took their place. All the ingredients and conditions for industrialization were present, but England did not encourage this, and indeed tried to prevent it by taxing machinery. And so the burden on the land grew and with it unemployment and poverty, and there was a progressive ruralization of India.

But the process of history and economics cannot be stopped for long. Although general poverty was increasing, small groups accumulated some capital and wanted fields for investment. And so machine industry grew in India, partly with Indian capital, very much more so with foreign capital. Indian capital was largely dependent on foreign capital and, in particular, could be controlled by the foreign banking system. It is well-known that the World War gave a great push to Indian industry and afterwards, for reasons of imperial policy, England changed her policy towards Indian industry and began to encourage it, but mostly with foreign capital. The growth of so-called *swadeshi* industries in India thus represented, to a very great extent, the increasing hold of British capital on India.

The growth of industries and nationalist movements in all the countries of the East checked Western exploitation and the profits of Western capitalism began to go down. War debts and other consequences of the war were a tremendous burden for all the countries concerned. There was not so much money or profits of industry to be distributed to the working class in the West, and the discontent and pressure of the workers grew. There was also the living incentive and inspiration of the Russian Revolution for the workers.

Meanwhile two other processes were working silently but with great rapidity. One was the concentration of wealth and industrial power in fewer hands by the formation of huge trusts, cartels, and combines. The other was a continuous improvement in technique in the methods of

production, leading to greater mechanization, far greater production, and more unemployment as workers were replaced by machinery. And this led to a curious result. Just when industry was producing goods on the biggest mass scale in history, there were few people to buy them as the great majority were too poor to be able to afford them. The armies of the unemployed were not earning anything, so how could they spend? And even the majority of those earning had little to spare. A new truth suddenly dawned on the perplexed minds of the great captains of industry (this dawning process has not yet taken place among the leaders of industry in India), and the truth was this: that mass production necessitates mass consumption. But if the masses have no money how are they to buy or consume? And what of production then? So production is stopped or restricted and the wheels of industry slow down till they barely move. Unemployment grows all the more and this again makes consumption diminish.

This is the crisis of capitalism which has had the world by the throat for over four years. Essentially it is due to the ill-distribution of the world's wealth, to its concentration in a few hands. And the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it till it eats and destroys the very system which created it. There is no lack of money in the world, no lack of foodstuffs, or the many other things that man requires. The world is richer today than it has ever been and holds promise of untold advance in the near future. And yet the system breaks down and while millions starve and endure privation, huge quantities of foodstuffs and other articles are destroyed, insect pests are let loose on the fields to destroy crops, harvests are not gathered, and nations meet together to confer how to restrict future crops of wheat and cotton and tea and coffee and so many other articles. From the beginning of history man has fought with nature to get the barest necessities of life, and now that nature's wealth is poured out before him, enough to remove poverty forever from the world, his only way of dealing with it is to burn and destroy it, and become poorer and more destitute in the process.

History has never offered a more amazing paradox. It seems clear enough that the capitalist system of industry, whatever its services in the past may have been, is no longer suited to the present methods of production. Technical advance has gone far ahead of the existing social structure and, as in the past, this hiatus causes most of our present-day disorders. Till that lag is made up and a new system in keeping with the new technique is adopted, the disorders are likely to continue. The change-over to the new system is of course opposed by those who have vested interests in the old system and though this old system is dying before their eyes, they prefer to hold on to their little rather than share a lot with others.

It is not, fundamentally, a moral issue, as some people imagine, although there is a moral side to it. It is not a question of blaming capitalism or cursing capitalists and the like. Capitalism has been of the greatest service to the world and individual capitalists are but tiny wheels in the big machine. The question now is whether the capitalist system has not outlived its day and must now give place to a better and a saner ordering of human affairs, which is more in keeping with the progress of science and human knowledge.

In India, during this period, the tremendous burden on land continued and even increased, despite the growth of industry in certain areas. Economic discontent increased. The middle classes grew up, and finding no sufficient scope for self-development, demanded political changes and took to agitation. More or less similar causes worked all over the colonial and dependent East. Especially after the war, national movements grew rapidly in Egypt and most of the countries of Asia. These movements were essentially due to the distress of the masses and the lower middle classes. There was a strange similarity even in the methods employed by these movements — non-cooperation, boycotts of legislatures, boycotts of goods, hartals, strikes, etc. Occasionally there were violent outbreaks, as in Egypt and Syria, but stress was laid far more on peaceful methods. In India, of course, non-violence was made a basic principle by the Congress at the suggestion of Gandhiji. All these national struggles for freedom have continued till now and they are bound to continue till a solution of the basic problem is found. Fundamentally, this solution is not merely a question of satisfying the natural desire for self-rule but one of filling hungry stomachs.

The great revolutionary nationalist urge in Asia of the after-war years gradually exhausted itself for the time being and conditions stabilized themselves. In India this took the form of the Swarajist entry into the Assembly and the Councils. In Europe also the middle nineteen-twenties was a period of settling down and adaptation to the new conditions created by the World War. The revolution that had hovered all over Europe in 1919 and 1920 failed to come off and receded into the background. American gold poured into Europe and revived to some extent the war-weary and disillusioned peoples of that continent and created a false appearance of prosperity. But this prosperity had no real basis and the crash came in 1929 when the United States of America stopped lending money to Europe and South America. Many factors, and especially the inherent conflicts of a declining capitalism, contributed to this crash, and the house of cards of after-war capitalist prosperity began to tumble down. That process of tumbling down has been going on at a tremendous pace for four years and there is no end to it yet. It is called the slump, trade depression, the crisis, etc., but it is

really the evening of the capitalist system and the world is being compelled by circumstances to recognize this. International co-operation has failed, the world market which was the essential basis of capitalism is disappearing, and each nation is trying frantically to shift for itself at the cost of others. Whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain: that the old order has gone and all the king's horses and all the king's men will not set it up again.

As the old capitalist order has tottered, the challenge to it by the growing forces of labour has grown more intense. This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This had led to fascism and, in its milder forms, to the formation of so-called national governments. Essentially, these are the last ditch efforts of the possessing classes, or the 'kept classes' as they have been called by an American economist, to hold on to what they have. The struggle becomes more intense and the forms of nineteenth century democracy are discarded. But fascism or national governments offer no solution to the fundamental economic inconsistencies of the present-day capitalist system and so long as they do not remove the inequalities of wealth and solve the problem of distribution, they are doomed to fail. Of the major capitalist countries the United States of America is the only place where some attempt is being made today towards lessening, to a slight extent, inequalities of wealth by state action. Carried to a logical conclusion, President Roosevelt's programme will lead to a form of state socialism; it is far more likely that the effort will fail and result in fascism. England, as is her habit, is grimly muddling through and waiting for something to happen. Meanwhile she has derived considerable help from India's gold resources. But all this is temporary relief only and the nations slide downhill and approach the brink.

Thus, if we survey the world today, we find that capitalism, having solved the problem of production, helplessly faces the allied problem of distribution and is unable to solve it. It was not in the nature of the capitalist system to deal satisfactorily with distribution, and production alone makes the world top-heavy and unbalanced. To find a solution for distributing wealth and purchasing power evenly is to put an end to the basic inequalities of the capitalist system and to replace capitalism itself by a more scientific system.

Capitalism has led to imperialism and to the conflicts of imperialist Powers in search for colonial areas for exploitation, for areas of raw produce and for markets for manufactured goods. It has led to ever increasing conflicts with the rising nationalism of colonial countries, and to social conflicts with powerful movements of the exploited working

class. It has resulted in recurrent crises, political and economic, leading to economic and tariff wars as well as political wars on an enormous scale. Every subsequent crisis is on a bigger scale than the previous one, and now we live in a perpetual state of crisis and slump and the shadow of war darkens the horizon.

And yet it is well to remember that the world today has a surfeit of food and the other good things of life. Terrible want exists because the present system does not know how to distribute them. Repeated international conferences have failed to find a way out because they represented the interests of vested interests and dared not touch the system itself. They grope blindly in the dark in their stuffy rooms while the foundations of the house they built are being sapped by the advance of science and economic events. Everywhere thinkers have recognized the utter inadequacy of the existing system, though they have differed as to the remedies. Communists and socialists point with confidence to the way of socialism and they are an ever growing power for they have science and logic on their side. In America a great stir was caused recently by the technocrats, a group of engineers who want to do away with money itself and to substitute for it a unit of energy, an erg. In England the social credit theories of Major Douglas, according to which the whole production of the nation will be evenly distributed to the whole population — a kind of 'dividends for all' — find increasing acceptance. Barter takes the place of trade both in the domestic and the international market. The growth of these revolutionary theories even among the well-to-do classes, and especially the intellectuals, is in itself an indication of the tremendous change in the mentality that is taking place in the world. How many of us can conceive a world without money and with the invisible erg as its measure of value? And yet this is soberly and earnestly advocated not by wild agitators but by well-known economists and engineers.

This is the world background.

The Asiatic background is intimately related to this and yet it has its peculiar features. Asia is the main field of conflict between nationalism and imperialism. Asia is still undeveloped as compared to Europe and North America. It has a vast population which can consume goods if they had the necessary purchasing power to do so. To the hard pressed imperialist Powers seeking frantically for areas of economic expansion, Asia still offers a field, though nationalism offers many obstructions. Hence the talk of a 'push to Asia' to find an outlet for the surplus goods of the West and thus stabilize Western capitalism for another period. Capitalism is a young and growing force in the East; it has not, as in India, wholly overthrown feudalism yet. But even before capitalism had established itself, other forces, inimical to it, have risen to challenge it.

And it is obvious that if capitalism collapses in Europe and America it cannot survive in Asia.

Nationalism is still the strongest force in Asia (we can ignore for our present purpose the Soviet territories of Asia). This is natural as a country under alien domination must inevitably think first in terms of nationalism. But the powerful economic forces working for change in the world today have influenced this nationalism to an ever increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialist garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle also for economic freedom. Independence and the socialist state become the objectives, with varying degrees of stress being laid on the two aspects of the problem. As political freedom is delayed, the other aspect assumes greater importance, and it now seems probable, especially because of world conditions, that political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.

This is the Asiatic background.

In India, as in other Asiatic colonial countries, we find a struggle today between the old nationalist ideology and the new economic ideology. Most of us have grown up under the nationalist tradition and it is hard to give up the mental habits of a lifetime. And yet we realize that this outlook is inadequate, it does not fit in with existing conditions of our country or in the world; there is a hiatus, a lag. We try to bridge this hiatus but the process of crossing over to a new ideology is always a painful one. Many of us are confused and perplexed today because of this. But the crossing has to be made, unless we are to remain in a stagnant backwater, overwhelmed from time to time by the wash of the boats that move down the river of progress. We must realize that the nineteenth century cannot solve the problems of the twentieth, much less can the seventh century or earlier ages do so.

Having glanced at the general background of Asia and the world we can have a clearer view of our own national problem. India's freedom affects each one of us intimately and we are apt to look upon it as a thing apart and unconnected with world events. But the Indian problem is a part of the Asiatic problem and is tied up with the problems of the world. We cannot, even if we will it, separate it from the rest. What happens in India will affect the world and world events will change India's future. Indeed it may be said that the three great world problems today are: the fate of capitalism, which means the fate of Europe and America, the future of India, and the future of China, and all these are interrelated.

India's struggle today is part of the great struggle which is going on all over the world for the emancipation of the oppressed. Essentially, this is

an economic struggle, with hunger and want as its driving forces, although it puts on nationalist and other dresses.

Indian freedom is necessary because the burden on the Indian masses as well as the middle classes is too heavy to be borne and must be lightened or done away with. The measure of freedom is the extent to which this burden is removed. This burden is due to the vested interests of a foreign government as well as those of certain groups and classes in India and abroad. The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question, as Gandhiji said recently, of divesting vested interests. If an indigenous government took the place of foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom.

We have got into an extraordinary habit of thinking of freedom in terms of paper constitutions. Nothing could be more absurd than this lawyer's mentality which ignores life and the vital economic issues and can only proceed on the basis of the *status quo* and precedents. Too much reliance on past practice has somehow succeeded in twisting the lawyer's head backwards and he seems to be incapable of looking ahead. Even the halt and the lame go slowly forward; not so the lawyer who is convinced, like the fanatic in religion, that truth can only lie in the past.

The Round Table scheme is almost as dead as Queen Anne and hardly deserves notice. It was not meant to give an iota of freedom to the Indian people; it sought to win over certain Indian vested interests to the British side and in this it succeeded. It answered, to the satisfaction of its votaries, the question I had formulated at the beginning of this essay: whose freedom are we striving for? It gave greater protection and assurance and freedom to the British vested interests in India. It was Home Rule for the Viceroy as Mr Vithalbhai Patel said. It confirmed the interests of British capital and British services and, in some cases, gave them even more than they have now. It tried to perpetuate the alien military occupation of India. Further, it gave greater freedom and importance to the vested interests of the princes and the semi-feudal magnates. In brief, the whole scheme was meant for the protection and perpetuation of the numerous vested interests that exploit the Indian masses. Having done this useful and, to themselves, profitable piece of work, the originators of the scheme told us that autonomy was a costly affair and would mean the expenditure of many millions for each province! Thus not only were all the old burdens on the masses to be continued but many new ones were to be added. This was the ingenious solution discovered by the wise and learned men who foregathered at the Round Table Conference. Intent on protecting their class privileges they happened to forget an odd three hundred and fifty million people in India.

Even a child in politics can point out the folly of this procedure. The whole basis and urge of the national movement came from a desire for economic betterment, to throw off the burdens that crushed the masses and to end the exploitation of the Indian people. If these burdens continue and are actually added to, it does not require a powerful mind to realize that the fight must not only continue but grow more intense. Leaders and individuals may come and go; and they may get tired and slacken off; they may compromise or betray; but the exploited and suffering masses must carry on the struggle for their drill-sergent is hunger. Swaraj or freedom from exploitation for them is not a fine paper constitution or a problem of the hereafter. It is a question of the here and now, of immediate relief. Roast lamb and mint sauce may be a tasty dish for those who eat it but the poor lamb is not likely to appreciate the force of the best of arguments which point out the beauty to sacrifice for the good of the elect and the joys of close communion, even though dead, with mint sauce.

India's immediate goal can therefore only be considered in terms of the ending of exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with world struggle. Is our aim human welfare or the preservation of class privileges and the vested interests of pampered groups? The question must be answered clearly and unequivocally by each one of us. There is no room for quibbling when the fate of nations and millions of human beings is at stake. The day for palace intrigues and parlour politics and pacts and compromises passes when the masses enter politics. Their manners are not those of the drawing room; we never took the trouble to teach them any manners. Their school is the school of events and suffering is their teacher. They learn their politics from great movements which bring out the true nature of individuals and classes, and the civil disobedience movement has taught the Indian masses many a lesson which they will never forget.

Independence is a much abused word and it hardly connotes what we are driving at. And yet there is no other suitable word and, for want of a better, we must use it. National isolation is neither a desirable nor a possible idea in a world which is daily becoming more of a unit. International and intra-national activities dominate the world and nations are growing more and more interdependent. Our ideal and objective cannot go against this historical tendency and we must be prepared to discard a narrow nationalism in favour of world co-operation and real

internationalism. Independence therefore cannot mean for us isolation but freedom from all imperialist control, and because Britain today represents imperialism, our freedom can only come after the British connection is severed. We have no quarrel with the British people, but between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace. If imperialism goes from Britain we shall gladly co-operate with her in the wider international field; not otherwise.

British statesmen of the Liberal and Labour variety often point out to us the ills of a narrow nationalism and dwell on the virtues of what used to be known as the British Empire and is now euphemistically called the British Commonwealth of Nations. Under cover of fine and radical words and phrases they seek to hide the ugly and brutal face of imperialism and try to keep us in its embrace of death. Some Indian public men, who ought to know better, also praise the virtues of internationalism, meaning thereby the British Empire, and tell us in sorrow how narrow-minded we are in demanding independence, in place of that wonderful thing (which nobody offers us) Dominion Status. The British, it is well known, have a remarkable capacity for combining their moral instincts with their self-interest. That is perhaps not unnatural, but it is remarkable how some of our own countrymen are taken in by this unctuous and hypocritical attitude. Even the light of day is wasted on those who keep their eyes shut. It is worth noting however that the foreign policy of England has been the greatest stumbling block to international co-operation through the League of Nations or otherwise. All the European and American world knows this but most of us, who look at foreign politics through English spectacles, have not grasped this fact yet. Disarmament, air-bombing, the attitude to the Manchurian question, are some of the recent witnesses to England's attitude. Even the Kellogg-Briand Pact of Paris, which was to have outlawed war, was only accepted by England subject to certain qualifications and reservations regarding her empire, which effectively nullified the pact. The British Empire and real internationalism are as the poles apart and it is not through that empire that we can march to internationalism.

The real question before us, and before the whole world, is one of the fundamental change of regime, politically, economically, socially. Only thus can we put India on the road to progress and stop the progressive deterioration of our country. In a revolutionary period, such as exists in the world today, it is foolish waste of energy to think and act in terms of carrying on the existing regime and trying to reform it and improve it. To do so is to waste the opportunity which history offers once in a long while. 'The whole world is in revolution' says Mussolini. 'Events themselves are a tremendous force pushing us on like some implacable will.'

Individuals, however eminent, play but a minor role when the world is on the move. They may divert the main current here and there to some slight extent; they may not and cannot stop the rushing torrent. And therefore the only peace that can endure is with circumstances, not merely with men.

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international co-operative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realization of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. As Bernard Shaw has said: 'This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.'

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